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ANNEX

The Types of English Literature

EDITED BY

WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON

SAINTS' LEGENDS

BY

GORDON HALL GEROULD

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TO
K. F. G.

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PREFACE

IN the pages that follow I have tried to write the history of saints' legends as one part of the survey of English literature to be presented by the series of which this volume is a member. My difficulties have been many. Although the lives of saints began to affect the vernacular literatures of Europe as soon as such literatures came into being, and although legends in the vulgar tongues were everywhere exceedingly popular until modern times, they have been little studied, at least in their relations to one another and to their historical backgrounds. I have had, as a matter of fact, no model for this book, since no such study has hitherto been made for any of the European literatures. I have had at once the pleasures and the pains of mapping out a new region. I can only hope that I have escaped some of the errors to which the pioneer in cartography is liable.

Furthermore, it has required a good deal of patience to disentangle what I can only describe as the snarl of legends from the later Middle Ages. Here, again, other scholars have given me little help, though I must gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Horstmann, who by his indomitable zeal in editing texts has done more than any other one man to make my study possible. His work has never been recognized at its true worth, nor has

he ever received his due meed of praise. Considering the mass of his publications, one can excuse their faults of haste and disorder. At the same time, in reviewing his work, as well as in dealing with much else that has been published with regard to individual legends or groups of legends, I have found caution very necessary. The study of special problems has constantly retarded the progress of the book. That many of them I have had to leave unsolved goes without saying, though I have been working towards this volume for more than ten years. Yet I beg my readers to believe that I have not expressed opinions unfortified by study. If in respect to certain legends that have been much discussed, like the Cynewulfian poems, my views are novel, it is perhaps because my approach has been consistently from the point of view of the type itself.

What I have said is partly by way of extenuation: it is meant neither as defiance nor complaint. My one desire is that others may come, through reading this book, to see the nobility of the impress that saints' legends have made on our literature, as I have come to see it. The story is, for the most part, of a day long past, but its significance remains. I have tried to show that legends are dry and dusty merely because the dust has been allowed to settle upon them. The dryness, I fancy, is merely a matter of ourselves, in any case.

As many acknowledgments as possible to studies that have aided me I have made in the text. To other scholars whose work I have used, but have not specifically men-

tioned, I wish to express my thanks in equal measure. I must, moreover, take occasion to pay my tribute to Professor Napier, of Oxford, who has died while the sheets of this book have been going through the press. To him I owe my first impulse to the study of saints' legends, and to him I had hoped to submit this volume in all humility. The field was his more than any other man's, just as a searching knowledge of the earlier periods of our literature in general was more completely his than any other scholar's. To Professor Neilson, of Harvard, I wish to give my thanks for suggesting this book in the first instance, for not pressing me to finish the task in haste, and for reading the proof. To several of my colleagues at Princeton I am indebted for criticism by the way, but particularly to Professor Root, who read the completed manuscript. Lastly, my gratitude is due to my wife, who has taken pains both with manuscript and proof, to the betterment of both.

G. H. G.

PRINCETON, *July*, 1916.

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SAINTS' LEGENDS

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION AND USE

TO write the history of saints' lives as they have appeared in English literature requires, first of all, a working definition. It is easy enough to say that legends of the saints occupy a place apart from other literature by reason of their subject-matter. From the point of view of the casual observer, they are merely a specialized form of biography, written sometimes in verse and sometimes in prose; varying in their content from the most severely critical history to the most wildly fantastic fiction; and intended either to instruct the reader in the veritable deeds of great leaders of men or to edify him by examples of the beauty and power of holy living. Yet as a specialized form of biography merely, this various mass of literary works does not constitute a type that could justifiably be treated in the present series. Conglomerate as it is, there must be discoverable some bond of union between the diverse content and form of its members that will permit us to trace its course from Ælfric to Chaucer, from Chaucer to Alban Butler. Otherwise, it cannot be regarded as a *genre* at all, and the lives of

saints must be relegated to one or another field of narrative, where, on the basis of external treatment, they may chance to find a proper resting-place.

There need be no argument to prove that a definition by subject-matter or by form would be inadequate. Both of these elements vary and shift from author to author, as from age to age. With regard to the former, one might as well try to discuss under a single heading all accounts of battles in English literature, from the Old English *Finnesburh* to Thackeray's description of Waterloo, as to attempt to unite on the basis of material the fifteenth-century *Christina Mirabilis* with Professor Bury's *Life of St. Patrick*. With respect to form, moreover, what possible link can there be between the rhapsodical march of Cynewulf's *Elene* and the haltingly pedestrian prose of the *Blickling Homilies*, though they were written in the same general period? By these paths, it is evident, we shall come to no workable definition of legends as a type.

Nor is it permissible so to limit the field of inquiry as to include merely works of a certain class or time, and thus to simplify the problem. It would be easy to say, for example, that only such lives as were in some degree touched by the spirit of wonder or romance should be considered, or that poetical legends only should be included; but the standard would be foolish, arbitrary, and of no profit. Saints' lives of whatever content and form demand equal consideration, since they must all be representatives of the type, if such a type exists. Works of edification as well as works with the real or ostensible aim

of teaching history have a claim to the name of legend, in this sense. Imagination and sober narration hold the field together. In the words of one of the most learned and clear-sighted of the modern Bollandists, M. Delehaye: "A new *genre* develops, which is concerned with biography, with panegyric, and with moral instruction."

A definition by origins is not less impossible than a definition by subject-matter or by form. As the reader will discover from the chapter following this, if he does not already know, the sources of legends are as various as the forms they have taken, and the manners of their genesis differ almost as widely as the materials out of which they have grown. Though convention, in the shape of formulæ, has always been beloved of legend-makers and legend-writers, it has operated with such free scope that it offers no clue to the identification of the type. East and west, under conditions and influences of the most widely varying sort, uncontrolled save by a prevailingly genuine desire to advance the interests of the Church, the acts, passions, and miracles of the saints have come to the knowledge of men and have been recorded. They have been a solace, an inspiration, and a moral force in the history of the world; but they cannot be described or limited by the terms of their origin. Place, time, and environment are important factors in their development, but not the factors that determine the essential qualities of their being.

With all these customary and normal criteria for determining the nature of a literary type discarded — the

standards of substance, of form, and of origin — the reader may with good reason inquire whether saints' lives can properly be said to constitute a *genre* at all. I should answer the query by saying that they can be, and are to be, so considered, though the difficulties of differentiation from other types need not be concealed. In point of fact, the definition of them as a type must be psychological rather than formal. It depends upon the causes of their development and the influence of their propagation on the human mind rather than upon the elements of their constitution. More than almost any other form of literature, the legends of saints are associated with a particular attitude on the part of their makers towards the visible and invisible phenomena of existence. They are, in the nature of the case, ecclesiastical, but not narrowly so; they are moral of tendency, but not didactic; they inculcate piety, but do not of necessity teach doctrine. They take for granted the infinity of God's power and, almost equally, the dignity of man. They demand reverence of maker and hearer alike, but they do not require superstitious credulity. Though many of them are stained by ignorant and unworthy associations, as a type they are inspirers of purity and militant guardians of the integrity of the human soul. Individualistic as is their tendency (a trait they hold in common with all biography), they yet represent the solidarity of man's endeavor towards the power outside himself that makes for righteousness. Thus the view of history exemplified by them is that the forward movement of the world has been hastened by

great leaders, but by leaders working with and for their followers, and always under the guidance of the divine hand. Widely as the ideals of human conduct differ, as set forth in the stories of the Egyptian anchorites and of men like Gregory the Great or Thomas of Canterbury, the legends show a common aspiration towards an unworldly goal. Whether in fantastic apologue and parable or in sober narration of well-authenticated history, the lives of the saints represent the search not only for goodness but for truth.

This constant attitude of mind on the part of those responsible for the composition of saints' legends makes it possible to formulate a working definition of these legends as a literary type, though not as a formal type. An absolute definition, difficult to make in the case of almost every *genre*, seems out of the question here, where the product is so various and the development so influenced by changing factors. *The saint's legend is a biographical narrative, of whatever origin circumstances may dictate, written in whatever medium may be convenient, concerned as to substance with the life, death, and miracles of some person accounted worthy to be considered a leader in the cause of righteousness; and, whether fictitious or historically true, calculated to glorify the memory of its subject.*

In considering ecclesiastical legends as a literary type, one is not primarily concerned, of course, with their historical accuracy. One views the product as it stands, the result of complex forces operating through long periods of time, and takes it for what it is worth. Without altogether

neglecting questions of history, we are here concerned for the most part with questions of literature. For our purpose, the legends of St. George and St. Christopher in their later stages are of as much interest as the authentic acts of St. Perpetua and Bede's account of St. Cuthbert. We may find profit in the inquiry whether such persons as St. George and St. Catharine of Alexandria actually existed; but since their lives have been written and rewritten, expanded and elaborated, our chief business is with the tissue of imaginings that constitutes their legends. The lives thus composed have at any rate real existence, whether or not the characters behind them lived in the actual world or only in the cumulative fancy of passing generations of believers. The legends themselves are our proper material for study.

In point of fact, with reference to the older saints at least, it almost seems as if the influence and popularity of saints were in inverse ratio to their authenticity. Certainly the most veracious accounts of the early martyrs now extant concern those saints who have not enjoyed the widest and most enduring celebrity. Without pushing the statement to the limits of absurdity (for abundant redactions of a life, even though much embroidered, sometimes make possible an arrival at historical truth), it is incontestable, as M. Delehaye admits, that "historical tradition has been more difficult to guard in the most frequented sanctuaries than anywhere else." As in the case of secular heroes, unveracious stories were more likely to grow up about those heroes of the Church whose

personalities and supposed powers attracted the widest notice and the deepest veneration.

Notwithstanding the fact that the lives as they were written, and not as the modern historian would have had them written, are the proper and only possible material for a study of the legendary type, it must not be forgotten that we are dealing with a form of biography. It will not do to treat legends, even when studying the part they have played in literature, simply as so much fiction. They are too real, and their connection with the historical events of the past is too intimate, to permit us thus to discard all thought of the actual. Even when they are most nearly allied to romance, they differ from tales pure and simple by their attachment to history and topography. Some saints owe their existence to archæological misunderstandings, and some to reminiscences of pagan myth, as we shall see; but no saint in the calendar lacks a local habitation and an historical background.

In writing a history of saints' lives as they have appeared in English literature, the international aspects of the type cannot well be ignored. In spite of the local attachments of the particular legends, the type can never be altogether isolated as a racial or regional growth. Most literary *genres*, however widely cultivated, have had an individual, if not altogether independent, development in various national literatures. Not so with the legend. At least a due proportion of Englishmen have been canonized, and many of them have been very widely revered outside of England; but their lives cannot be said

to possess extraordinary qualities that distinguish them from the lives of saints who were born in other lands. Moreover, the primary accounts of even the most characteristically national figures were written not in the vernacular but in Latin. The career of Thomas of Canterbury had without doubt a most important influence on the history of England; yet his followers, like Edward Grim and John of Salisbury, wrote their narratives of his martyrdom in the language of the Church universal. His memory thus became a heritage of the world at large, and his legend, in this sense, no more a part of English literature than of the literatures of France or Iceland.

Thus with all saints, early or late, there is no clear line of demarcation in the matter of language. Though hosts of them, unlike Thomas, were celebrated only locally, their lives were in the first place usually set down in Latin rather than in the vernacular of the place where they dwelt. Latin, and to a less extent Greek, became the prevailing medium of legends, while other languages adopted and adapted such lives as seemed likely, for reasons of popular veneration or instructional value, to appeal to the unlearned.

Can it be possible, then, to trace the history of the legend in English or any other vernacular literature? Has it had a growth sufficiently independent to make worth while the effort to show its stages of development? A separate existence, even in the partial sense that is true of other types, it has not possessed. Never but once did a school of legend-writing grow up in England to make

English legends, in any way, so peculiarly a national product as English tragedy became in the Elizabethan period; and that school soon passed. Yet saints' lives have had a long and varied course in the history of English letters, with marked variations in manner from time to time and with equally well-marked times of florescence. Dependent at almost every step for materials and even for style on models which were foreign at least in language, the *genre* has yet blazed a distinguishable trail that may be followed by and for itself. More frequently than is the case with most types, one must view the legend in its international relations, for only by this means can one get a proper sense of perspective; but one is justified in studying the national product by itself, and even in temporarily isolating it.

Another problem, immediately connected with the one just discussed, is this: how much attention should be paid in an account of English lives of saints to legends written on English soil and by natives of Great Britain but in Latin or French? The question is complicated by the fact that both these languages can scarcely be regarded as foreign to the writers and readers of saints' legends at the times when the type was most influential. To neglect legends written under purely native inspiration because the authors chose to put them in a tongue that was equally familiar to them with English, and that had to their minds greater dignity, would make us lose sight of important links in the development of the type. At the same time, it would be inconvenient to give an account of

all the lives in French or Latin that happened to be written on English soil. The safest procedure seems to be to include those that can be shown to have had any marked influence on the *genre*, whether by way of inspiration to other writers or as necessary factors themselves in the story of the type.

Whatever may be true of saints' lives in other literatures, in English the *genre* is prevailingly mediæval. Coming in with the dawn of Christianity on the horizon of our Germanic forefathers, it flourished without intermission through the political and religious changes of the eight following centuries and declined only at the Reformation. Slight as was the religious character of that movement in its first stages, it was accompanied by so many revolutionary phenomena and resulted in such far-reaching alterations in the fabric of the national life that for some centuries thereafter the legend had a precarious and almost negligible existence. Though still beloved by a minority, it did not retain sufficient hold on the people at large to make its continued life a factor of importance. The attitude of mind had changed; and popular sympathy, without which no literary form can have real vitality, was diverted. Catholic in a broad sense the legend must always be, as our definition above-stated demands; and catholicity of temper was not a marked trait of the centuries following the Reformation. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed a gradual return on the part of an influential section of the public to habits of thought long neglected and, with this return,

a partial recrudescence of legend-writing. Without fully recovering its vitality and with considerable change in its nature, it has been regaining little by little its lost place in literature. Yet, when all is said, the type that we are studying can best be observed in the Middle Ages.

It is on this account that one does well to approach the lives of saints with as few prepossessions against the mediæval spirit as may be. In studying their origins and determining the historical truth of their narratives, of course, whatever aid can be found in modern scientific method must be used fearlessly. A shattered tradition is not to be weighed against the truth. But in appreciating the position of legends in the past, their worth and influence in the light of a former day, one must, as far as possible, regard them as did the men of that time. From this point of view, which I believe to be the correct one for the historian of the *genre*, fable has no less worth than veracious narrative. In tracing the progress of a literary type that has, historically speaking, often been nourished on error, the mistake would be to lose sight of the goal in a continual estimation of truth or falsity.

The legends were written, it is true, as history, and were so accepted by the world of believers; but it must not be forgotten that to the Middle Ages, as to antiquity, history meant something very different from what it means to us. Cicero and Quintilian define the historian's task in phrases that make us, who vaunt our scientific spirit, recoil with horror. To them literary effect was the paramount consideration; critical investigation of fact

was of secondary importance. Where certain knowledge was procurable, the author's plain duty, as conceived by Tacitus or Bede, was to record the facts veraciously; but he might permit himself to heighten effects when his sense of literary art demanded, and he had no notion of ascertaining the truth by patient sifting of evidence. Thus, in the case of legend writers, style for the most part was substituted for research, and error, once admitted, had small chance of subsequent detection.

The question is sometimes asked whether all persons in the old times believed the crudely fabulous tales that were related about so many saints. When the answer is given, as it must be with assurance, that even the best-educated men seem to have held faith in some of these things, the most unfavorable inferences are drawn as to their intelligence. Such contempt is unworthy and reflects no credit on those who feel it. Let the reader consider how far his unaided acumen would penetrate the mists of the world; and let him remember that the tendency to rely on authority, which has been of incalculable benefit to the race, fostered just such belief. At the same time, it seems clear that, all along, certain independent and outstanding spirits held the right to doubt. Professor Günter calls attention to the striking fact that the great theologians of the Middle Ages never rested their scholarly speculations on evidence drawn from the miracles of the saints. Presumably they regarded these wonders as matters of faith rather than of knowledge. Furthermore, there has always been shown by the greater writers a

tendency to discriminate between different classes of legendary stories and to discard the baser sort.

The saint's legend is, indeed, a literary type; but it has never been purely æsthetic in aim or divorced from practical uses in the uplifting of humanity. Beauty it has not lacked, but the grace it has most cultivated has been the beauty of holiness. At times it has reached great elevation of form, but it has depended for its effects less upon that than upon loftiness of sentiment. The work of edification has never been long absent from the minds of its makers. Its power has rested in the visions of righteousness that it has brought to the minds of common men. The straightforward narratives in the earliest authentic acts and passions, which still stir the reader, must have thrilled to the soul the distant co-religionists of the martyrs, to establish whose faith they were written. In the widely separated missions of the early Church it was sufficient to have the local calendar read without narrative attachment to recall to the minds of the worshippers the deeds of those who had lived and suffered for the true belief. In this way such calendars and martyrologies came into use as part of the services of the Church.

As time went on, the mass of tradition accumulated. Saints were soon celebrated in churches and countries other than their own; and martyrologies into which their names were adopted naturally added brief accounts of their lives. After the fifth century at the latest, as is evidenced by Caesarius of Arles and Gregory of Tours, complete legends, instead of passages from the martyr-

ologies, were read on the festivals of saints; and after the eighth century they became a regular part of the service at nocturns. Thence grew the practice of making collections of legends in the language of the Church. By the tenth century the use of legends in place of sermons, or as an addition to sermons, became common, which led to translations and to collections (or legendaries) in the vernacular. Isolated stories, usually known as *exempla*, many of which were derived from the lives of saints, came into great vogue as a result of the same tendency in homiletics. The growing cult of the Virgin in the later Middle Ages accompanied this movement and fostered the growth of encyclopædias of pious tales.

Meanwhile, outside the use of legends, and of incidents from the legends, in the churches and the cells or refectories of conventual establishments, there was a constant and increasing demand for the written records of the saints wherever the knowledge of reading became common. As a medium for the instruction of the young in the ecclesiastical schools, and for the amusement and edification of adults in abbey, castle, and town, they were used and beloved. As single works or in collections, they thus reached a wide public by double means, not only through the services of the Church but also through the reading and the hearing of them as polite literature. The chronicles, moreover, in all times contained accounts of the saints that were both read for themselves and used as sources for other lives. Further down in the social scale, legends furnished the peasant with recreation,

when read to him or recited to him — perhaps by some of the vagabonds who were his mental superiors and his social equals; and they gave him new materials for fireside tales. All classes found lives of saints to their liking, nor was it the fashion to consider them dull. They were an excellent substitute for fiction, but they were more than fiction.

Legends thus became fairly early a powerful instrument for teaching religion and morality. They were, moreover, not without their political uses. Vision literature, which is often to be identified absolutely with that of saintly lives, was used with powerful effect by the Church. Appeals to saints through visions, and visions attributed to saints, not infrequently restrained and controlled secular rulers, when more direct means would have been ineffectual. This combination of religious and political literature is not altogether to be attributed to pious fraud, for very often real mystical enthusiasm thus found vent. Uncritical as was the spirit that prompted and accepted it, there is nothing despicable about its course as a whole. In the career of St. Catharine of Siena, for example, it was truly admirable. Prophecy has never been considered an illegitimate method of leadership.

The legend thus permeated the religious, social, and political fabric of the Middle Ages. Whatever its absolute worth, it was for many centuries one of the most influential branches of literature. However much the world may have benefited by the causes that led to its

decay, we must regret that the type suffered in the change. Latter-day revivals, even in non-Catholic countries, seem to show that saints' lives still have a meaning and a value, though they now appear in new and more critical forms.

CHAPTER II

ORIGINS AND PROPAGATION

IN studying the origin of saints' lives the primary distinction to be made has to do with the saints themselves. On the one hand, there are the saints of undoubted authenticity, as to whose real existence there is no shadow of suspicion. Whether their cults were established by lawful canon of the Church or grew up irregularly, their historical position is assured. Some of them were martyrs and missionaries of the primitive Church, some bishops and princes of the age of Catholic supremacy, and some men of pious zeal who lived in centuries not very remote from our own; all along the way are found such sentinels of the truth. On the other hand, the hagiological record contains a multitude of other figures, perhaps equal in number to the first class and, from the point of view of the legend, of no less influence and value, who are in different case. Either there is grave doubt whether they had historical existence, or it is certain that they never actually lived. From every century till the later Middle Ages these saintly phantoms are reported. They were not, for the most part, fabrications consciously invented, any more than most fabulous legends were forgeries; but they arose from mistakes in the use of evidence and from popular imaginings.

In the legends concerning these two classes of saints there is often the most marked similarity, due partly to the unconscious imitation of the true by the false, and partly to the fact that the stories related of perfectly authenticated characters are often as untrustworthy as those clustering about purely fictitious persons. Indeed, it is a grievous error to suppose that by proving the legend of a saint to be false the historical position of the saint is invalidated. Certain fabulous elements in the legends are conditioned by origins, it is true, and are peculiar to the lives of saints whose personal history is either obscure or certainly unveracious; but almost every trait in the biographies of authenticated saints can be paralleled from the tales of the fictitious. The tendencies that affected the growth of the one affected the other equally.

The constitution of the legends, as we find them, is the resultant of two main factors: documentary evidence and popular imagination. Considering all saints and all legends by and large, the one factor is of no less importance than the other, for even with the histories of men and women, the chief events of whose lives are perfectly substantiated, the myth-making power of the folk has been busy. Whatever is spurious in them is, to a very great extent, due to the unconscious workings of the popular mind. Back of the written record lie the tales of country-side and town, which sprang up about the real or supposed personalities of the saints. That they grew quickly is shown by the fact that immediate followers of church-leaders, men who had known the subjects of the

biographies they were writing, often gave as literal truth stories that have all the hall-marks of fiction. Thus the marvels reported of Christina Mirabilis, a Belgian visionary of the thirteenth century, though she was personally known both to the famous bishop and cardinal, Jacques de Vitry, and to her biographer, Thomas de Chantimpré, exceed those of almost any other saint. They are partly the record of psycho-pathological phenomena, partly the grotesquely exaggerated renderings of such phenomena that became current among a simple-minded people. Bertrand of Pontigny, who had every opportunity of observing Edmund of Canterbury during the latter's exile, in writing the life of the saint includes an account of a contest with the devil which is a commonplace of legend. Similarly, Lantfred, a monk of Winchester, recounting in 981 certain contemporary miracles of St. Swithin, tells how a prominent citizen encountered three supernatural women on the meadows outside the walls of the town in broad daylight: a tale that in its entirety is not surpassed for wonder throughout the domain of folk-story.[1] These authors were men of more than average intelligence and were dealing with events of their own times; they reported with obvious sincerity of belief stories that found their origin in popular imaginings. Other writers recount such things with more reserve, but recount them all the same. "It is credibly reported" is a phrase that occurs over and over again in the works of the hagiographers.

[1] It is perhaps fair to say that Ælfric, when retelling the miracle in English a few years later, omits all the introductory marvels.

Unsubstantiated miracles and unauthentic episodes swell the later versions of most legends to an appalling degree. Once launched as popular tradition, they were sure of acceptance and perpetuation both by writing and by word of mouth: by the former because the authors of saints' lives in general were content to record what they found with as much elegance of diction as they could command, by the latter for the reasons that have made folk literature the most vital product of the human mind. When individual writers of trained discernment accepted impossible stories as truth, it is not strange that people at large should have believed. As a matter of fact, critical sense of any sort is the last quality that one need expect to find developed by the throng. Presumably, the folk would not be so fertile of imagination, the power that it does pre-eminently possess, were it not lacking in the ability to criticize destructively. For other *genres* than that of the legend, literature owes much to these qualities and defects, so that it is wiser not to despise even their grotesque manifestations.

Along with the general tendency of the people to accept report, to embroider narrative, and to invent explanations, should be mentioned the total ignorance of the mass of mankind, in any day, as to the laws of evidence. What seems for any reason plausible is believed, whether or not it be really in accord with facts that may be perfectly well known. The statements of the first witness to be heard are given credence, and no subsequent evidence can dislodge the conviction that the events in question

happened thus and so. However complete our theoretical adherence to the sufficiently commonplace notion that even eye-witnesses usually disagree in their accounts of a happening, every one of us finds it difficult to hold the balance of judgment between them. When this notion is ignored, as it has been by all traditional histories, the growth of the hero-legend is no matter for exclaim. In spite of the spread of education, it flourishes to-day: France has its myths of Napoleon, England of Nelson, and America of Washington, not to say of Lincoln. Our newspapers teem with more or less apocryphal stories. Further back, the myth-making power wove whole cycles of epic and romance about the persons of kings like Charlemagne and Richard Cœur-de-Lion and of less substantial figures like Beowulf and Arthur. With the primary object of ennobling chosen heroes, it has filched from one to enrich another, has jumbled together the most diverse elements, and has egregiously distorted chronology. "There were once seven churches here," a not unintelligent old woman one day said to me in an English village, "but all save this were torn down by Oliver Cromwell in the days of William the Conqueror."

The growth of the ecclesiastical legend, as far as popular elements are concerned, has been parallel to that of the secular myth. There has been the same tendency on the part of the followers of the great (and the great, be it said, have in this domain happily been for the most part the good) to see in their actions the evidence of supernatural power; there has been the same ready acceptance

of whatever tended to aggrandize their reputation; there has been the same curious apathy to contradictions of evidence and excesses of fancy. A constant belief in the merits of the saints has done much to accentuate tendencies that mere hero-worship would have been sufficient to foster. Arthur and Ælfred were great figures in the eyes of the people, but to Alban and to Thomas Becket they could appeal with assurance of aid in difficulty and distress. The acts and miracles of the saints were so much evidence that they would find in the saints themselves mediators with the All-Powerful; and they inevitably felt towards them more warmly than they could towards the old kings of the earth, who represented merely human glory. It was the intimacy of personal association that attracted, as well as the worship of power. How could this fail to stimulate the popular imagination and to loosen the reins of fact?

To discuss the nature of the miracles attributed to the saints is not the business of the historian of the legendary type. In view of the understanding given this generation by a science of the mind that is still groping somewhat blindly and must for the present be content with half explanations, certain phenomena, which a century ago must have been accepted wholly on faith or rejected absolutely, now appear to the critical mind worthy of entire belief. Other deeds and occurrences, equally well authenticated, must still be matters for faith and skepticism to battle over. What can be done is to preserve a tolerant mind with respect to what is beyond our understanding,

and to apply to all deeds of saints alike the processes of investigation that will enable us to say with some measure of human certainty that such and such recorded events did not take place, while such and such others actually did, whether or not the explanation of them found in mediæval works be justifiable or absurd.[1] In such a programme of study, modern scholarship, both Catholic and Protestant, is properly united.

It is a curious fact with reference to the popular growth of legend that, in spite of extravagance and lack of critical sense, even the most apocryphal of lives have been developed with some logical sequence. Except in the very late Middle Ages, when they were sometimes put together in a purely mechanical fashion, they show what Professor Günter happily calls "the logic of mass." There is a causal sequence in the order of events, which gives the most unveracious of lives considerable verisimilitude. Certain miracles follow certain others in a traditional and almost necessary order. This tendency naturally led to the use of unmeaning formulæ, but of itself was serviceable to the proper growth of legends. It allied them to the folk-story and gave them similar power of self-perpetuation; it made them vital as nothing else could, since no tale can survive in tradition that does not possess an adequate plot. Unlike the plots of most consciously wrought fiction, these frequently lack a pivotal situation; but they hold the attention and cling to the memory of the

[1] No unbiased mind can any longer doubt the reality of the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi, for example.

hearer by the careful linking of a chain of events. This element is most apparent in the case of legends that have been most completely dominated by popular tradition. Indeed, one would not be far wrong, I think, in saying that the folk-element is largely responsible for the greater vogue of the more unhistorical saints. There was probably action and reaction, the thronging of worshippers to a particular shrine giving rise to folk-legend and this, in turn, so forming itself as to preserve and magnify the memory of the saint.

The element of documentary evidence is only less important in the formation and perpetuation of saints' lives than the element of popular imagination. In the case of historical characters, it frequently occupies, as of course it ought by right always to do, the primary place. Hagiographers are, after all, biographers; and, though they have sometimes exercised marvellous freedom in handling their material, they have never quite given themselves over to romance. Whenever it is possible to arrive by any means at a first or even second hand account, it will be found that the record of events, however much embellished with marvels, is tolerably straightforward and free from error. The miracles themselves will be found to be modelled on scriptural events, in the desire of the writers to force a parallel to the glory of their spiritual masters, or to be the record of phenomena open to various interpretations but not impossible of belief. Bede's life of St. Cuthbert illustrates both tendencies.

Not every pretended follower of a saint, however, is to

be trusted to give a truthful biography. It would seem that authors of saints' lives considered themselves justified in pretending that they were companions and disciples of the persons about whom they were writing, even though they might be some centuries removed in the matter of time and many hundreds of miles in point of space. At least, they avail themselves of this privilege of imposture time and time again. A very notorious case of such fabrication is the version of the life of St. Catharine of Alexandria which pretends to be the work of Athanasius, successively the master, convert, and secretary of the saint. Now Catharine, if she lived at all, was martyred early in the fourth century, and this pseudo-Athanasius certainly did not write his legend till the sixth or seventh and, most probably, not till the ninth century. Whatever the original intention of the writer, he was as a matter of course identified with the great St. Athanasius, who flourished at Alexandria in the fourth century.

A secondary effect of written upon oral tradition was to harden and fix its form. Like folk-literature of every kind, legends, as they circulated among the people, would be exceedingly fluid in their nature and readily capable of union or severance. Once written down, they became the literary property of the Church and less liable to suffer transformation in such a way as to alter the essential plot. Authors might add or subtract, but they did it in a more or less mechanical way that left traces of rehandling. The best legends with reference to massing of

material, it is safe to assert, are those that have suffered least from the literary artificer.

There was still another way by which this written tradition affected legend. Such versions spread far and wide, and were known and used in many ways by clerics and laymen. By means of this use they permeated the consciousness of the people in general and, by degrees, returned to the state of oral tradition. In every country of Europe, but more especially in those whose inhabitants adhere to the Greek or Catholic faith, are still to be found fireside tales of saints, which must have come to the people in the first place through the medium of written documents. From the folk to the folk the circle was thus rounded.

Without attempting to make what would be beyond the scope of this book, an ordered narrative of the propagation of saints' lives from the earliest times down through the centuries, it will be well to trace briefly some of the steps in the progress, which, dealing much with the materials of romance, is of itself highly romantic. The sources whence the legends sprang and some of the general stages of their development need to be borne in mind by the reader who is to follow their course in a particular literature. Since, as stated above, there is marked similarity between the legends concerning saints of best authority and those concerning doubtful or invented figures, it is not necessary to separate the one class from the other in considering the elements of their origin and the chronology of their development. Wherever one class only is

affected by a tendency, it will be easy to indicate the fact.

As far as the saints of the primitive Church are concerned, the greatest credence is undoubtedly to be given the relations of eye-witnesses or well-informed contemporaries, and such fragments of legal reports as have been preserved. Had we in its entirety the proconsular report of the examination of any martyr, we should possess a matchless record. Unfortunately, these reports exist only as insertions in the passions of a few saints, the bulk of which are made up of second-hand relations. Even so, they are of immense worth as a standard of comparison by which to judge later accounts of the same saints or pretended accounts of later saints. If one places side by side such reports of examinations by magistrates as those contained in the passions of the Scillitan martyrs or St. Cyprian, and the academic disputations with the Emperor's viceroy attributed to Catharine of Alexandria, it is possible to see at a glance that in the former we have authentic records while in the latter only exercises of intellectual subtlety. The genuine fragments of reports, by their unadorned simplicity, have the power to touch the feelings, since they show brave men facing death without ostentation but with superb constancy. The records of eye-witnesses, as given in these early, authentic acts and passions, have the same straightforward character. Consider, in evidence of this, the accounts of Polycarp, of Cyprian again, or of Perpetua. Except in the case of the saint first named, the martyr-

doms are accompanied by no marvels that need excite distrust in the most skeptical mind; and the wonders of Polycarp's death are due only to a natural exaltation of spirit on the part of his followers. A vision as to his death came to him three days before he was killed; the voice of some person invisible encouraged him in the hall of judgment; at his execution the fire surrounded him like a cloud and did not burn him, but was extinguished by the gushing blood when his head was struck off.

Unhappily, these sober, unmistakably genuine accounts of the early martyrs by persons who were sufficiently close to them to be well-informed as to their lives are only about a dozen in number. The examination to which Professor Harnack has recently subjected the one hundred and seventeen articles in Ruinart's famous *Acta Sincera* shows, in agreement with the work of other modern scholars, that they are of very unequal value historically. Yet, taken as a whole, they present a striking contrast to legends in general. The more authentic acts display a marked effort on the part of their authors to tell faithfully to the scattered churches the simple story of the martyrs' lives and deaths. They certainly represent the temper of the earlier Christians in their avoidance of the crudely sensational and the unnecessarily controversial. Whatever miracles they recount seem to be, for the most part, the subjective interpretations placed upon actual events by spirits fired with lofty enthusiasm.

The growth of the legend with its accompanying features was, however, so rapid that no passion written

after the fifth century can be trusted to give a veracious account of events as they occurred. By that era certain forms of torment, certain actions, and certain types of speeches had become so fixed a part of every martyrdom that even the records of contemporaries were highly colored by them, while popular tradition along well-established lines prepared an abundance of unhistorical commonplaces for later writers. There came to be an etiquette of martyrdoms. It is only in the case of saints who were not martyrs in the sense of perishing at the hands of heathen persecutors, like the English Oswald, Edmund, or Thomas, that we find records in any way satisfactory. The acts, as distinguished from the passions, are somewhat more trustworthy, though it goes without saying that, from the first, romantic distortion was not confined to the deaths of heroes. The acts do show greater variety, however, and more frequently have a basis of fact along with the fictional embroidery. To the modern taste they have greater interest and inspiration, though the men of the Middle Ages appear to have taken greater delight in the sensational events which, they believed, attended the deaths of the saints.

Perhaps the most marked influence in bringing about the change from the simple veracity of the earliest lives to the wild romancing that was prevalent from the sixth century onwards was neo-Platonism. The speculations of this school furnished a parallel current to the growth of legend by means of folk tradition. Indeed, though they directly touched only the world of philosophical learning,

they seem to have sifted down to the masses and to have altered the general conceptions of life held by Christians. The theories of Iamblichus the Syrian as to the supremacy of mind over matter and a transcendental life, when translated into more concrete form, were well calculated to stir the enthusiasm of believers. Without accepting in their entirety the conclusions of the late Professor Lucius, one can have no manner of doubt that the mystical elements in neo-Platonism had a powerful influence in the establishment of the cults of the saints. The writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, which are first mentioned in the sixth century, make us understand how the Christian mystics applied the philosophical doctrines to the exposition of their religion. They are the work of a man who was at once philosopher and enthusiastic mystic, and they were a factor of importance in the development of legend from the beginning of the sixth century onwards.

Aside from the authentic acts, there grew up, both before and after the influence just mentioned, a series of saints' lives that may best be termed historical romances. The method by which they developed was the addition of the probable to the known. The class is very large and has representatives from every century. They are not to be called forgeries, for the most part, since they are largely the product of cumulative tradition and seem not to have risen through the conscious imagining of any one person. Two varieties, with reference to their subjects, may be recognized. There are, first, the legends that

weave about historical characters a tissue of imagination, more or less probable of itself but entirely lacking in documentary authority; and, secondly, there are the legends that contain in setting and events certain elements of historical truth, but none whatever as far as the personalities of the saints themselves are concerned. From the former class should be excluded, though it is difficult to draw the line of demarcation, a large number of legends, which have as their subjects real persons but which treat them without the slightest verisimilitude. These historical romances are not always adorned with miracles. Consider, for example, the story of Julitta and her son Cyricus, who were said to have suffered in the Diocletian persecutions. It has the sobriety and simplicity of manner that characterizes the most authentic passions. Julitta did not court martyrdom; but, when face to face with her persecutor Alexander, she repeated steadfastly her confession: "I am a Christian." When her little son, who was only three years old, had uttered the same words in imitation of her and had been slain by the furious governor, she went to her own death unattended by wonders but with unshaken courage. The impossible monstrosity of the tyrant marks the legend as romance, but it is fiction of a worthy sort. Sometimes these romances are furnished with an abundance of pretended documentary evidence, which gives them a specious air of veracity. The very ancient *Passio Sancti Procopii*, which represents the first stage of a long legendary progress, admirably illustrates this tendency. A

comparison with the brief account of the saint given by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* shows that the passion, in spite of the imperial edicts and legal reports that it contains, has no authority; yet it only elaborates on a basis of fact.

To the same class of historical romances dealing with real persons belong such of the apocryphal legends of Christ, of the Virgin, and of the Apostles as are not merely tales of fantasy. It was not unnatural that popular imagination should busy itself with those periods in the life of Jesus which the canonical Gospels left blank, nor that it should seek to supply the gaps in the scriptural records of Mary and the Apostles. To detail the processes by which this was accomplished would take overlong; but the works themselves, most of which are accessible in English to the reader, show on the most casual perusal how tradition worked from the known to the unknown, from the actual to the probable. So the childhood of Christ was pieced together; the history of the Magi was elaborated; incidents of the journey to Egypt were invented to supplement the curt statement of the New Testament; and the life at Nazareth was filled out with homely details. These apocryphal stories emphasized the humanity of Jesus and found favor by means of combining realism with miracle. On the other hand, the additions to the life of the Virgin brought into relief, rather, her position as the Mother of God, and became increasingly popular as her cult gained influence and authority. In the later Middle Ages a host of miracles, most of them

fantastic and some of them blasphemous — what are known as Mary legends — came to be attached to her name. They testify to the power of her cult, while they illustrate both the heights and the depths of legendary invention.

The earlier apocryphal acts of the Apostles are historical romances in the truest sense. Based on scriptural hints or scriptural silences, they elaborated the missionary activities and the passions of the followers of Christ. Early in the second century arose a work called the *Sortes Apostolorum*, which told how the Twelve cast lots to determine to what country each should go, and how they set forth to the various lands thus assigned them. Later there grew up a cycle of legends dealing with the adventures of particular members of the group. So Thomas and Bartholomew in India, Andrew in Scythia or Achaia, Peter and Paul in Rome, Philip in Phrygia, and the other Apostles elsewhere, came to be the subjects of elaborate romances. These later legends were often written to celebrate the history of particular churches or to express doctrines that the Church deemed heretical, though they always remained popular in tone and for the most part represented genuine, if mistaken, folk traditions. Among such apocryphal writings, condemned by Pope Gelasius in the fifth century as heretical and unworthy of belief, one of the best beloved was the romance of Paul and Thecla. In spite of the denunciation of the Church, this work deserved to retain its popularity, as it actually did, for it possessed something of the matter-

of-fact simplicity of the authentic acts and recorded even the miracle by which Thecla was saved from wild beasts in a sententious rather than ecstatic manner. This legend really stands on middle ground between the two varieties of historical romances above-mentioned. By virtue of the appearance of St. Paul it belongs with those dealing unveraciously with real persons, while by the introduction of Thecla, as well as by its form, it is to be placed among the later, elaborated romances.

A more adequate representative of the latter class is the legend of Catharine of Alexandria. Though the saint cannot be shown to have had actual existence, her story is by no means out of accord with the times in which it is placed. She has been identified with considerable show of probability as a legendary transformation of the celebrated Hypatia, though it is equally possible that she represents the unnamed Alexandrian lady, mentioned by Eusebius, who suffered under Diocletian. The historical foundation for the story is confined, in any case, to the merest hint; but the setting does not lack verisimilitude. Were it not for the harangues of the saint before her judges, which are in the worst possible taste, and the extravagance of the miracles that accompanied her passion, there would be no inherent improbability in the legend. Like this in many respects are the legends of St. Cecilia and St. Margaret. The historical residuum in both is slight, but the events narrated do not violate what may be called the decorum of history.

A fertile source for the unconscious creation of new

saints is found in the growth of the menologies and martyrologies, which by the third century, and perhaps before, were read in the churches. The earliest were merely calendars, without the addition of biographical details, and included none but local saints. From the fifth century onward, however, even local martyrologies contained the mention of both foreign and native martyrs, confessors, and bishops, while general works were compiled from these which gathered together without caution or criticism notices of saints from all lands. The resulting confusion furnishes many curiosities of hagiological lore. As the same saint was not infrequently celebrated on different days by different churches, it is not strange that doublets and even triplets should have arisen. So we find two Martins, one bishop of Tours and one of France, and three sets named Cosmo and Damian. Mistaken readings of manuscripts gave rise to new saints, like the Tribulus who was made from the name of a Phœnician town, the Cuminia who came into being from a misunderstanding as to the place-name Eumenia, or Amphibalus, the confessor saved by St. Alban, who was created by Geoffrey of Monmouth's mistaking a chasuble for a man. Similarly, the legend that Pope Eleutherius received a letter from a certain King Lucius of Britain, asking for the introduction of Christianity into the island, was due to a quite natural mistake in interpreting an entry in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Lucius was really a king of Edessa in Asia Minor, though he persisted in the English chronicles for many centuries. A not less common result was

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the transference of events from the life of one saint to that of another who bore the same name.

This latter process, however, was not confined to cases of simple transference. This grafting of legend upon legend, the habit of borrowing from the history of one saint to celebrate another, had a variety of forms. Leaving aside, as we ought always to do, the instances which can be proved to have arisen by conscious fraud, there are abundant examples to illustrate the tendency of a later legend to absorb the matter of an earlier. So Castissima and Euphrosyne, Barbara and Irene, Onesimus and Alexis, are doublets. Similarly, the earlier version of St. Christopher's life was transferred, when it reached France, to St. Savinianus of Troyes, who had probably lacked a history before. The crucifix, which appeared between the horns of a stag at the conversion of St. Eustace, is found also in the legends of Hubert, Meinulph of Paderborn, and Felix of Valois, saints of the eighth, ninth, and thirteenth centuries respectively. A case of borrowing, not very different from the above, in that it relates to a vision of Christ, connects the founder and first abbot of Vallombrosa, John of Gualberto, with an unnamed vassal of Richard I. of England. Each forgave the murderer of his father and was rewarded by having the image of Christ on the altar bow to him, as he knelt in church on Good Friday. Roger of Wendover, who tells the latter story in his *Chronicle*, makes King Richard witness the scene and forgive the knight for trespass.

This tendency to transfer and amalgamate gave rise

very early to formulæ, which were used by popular tradition as well as, it must be said with regret, by particular hagiographers to embellish certain situations likely to arise in the lives of many saints. There came to be formulæ for the disputations of persecuted Christians in the face of their judges, for prayers before martyrdom, and for martyrdom itself. The legend of Catharine of Alexandria is the classical example of the first; those of the same Catharine, of Barbara, of George, and of Blasius sufficiently illustrate the second; while instances of the third are even more common, though the series of tortures, ending in death by the sword, which Clement of Ancyra suffered in six cities, perhaps marks the climax of such elaborations. A whole class of saints arose, who bore their heads after death, Denis and Christopher, for example. Formulæ relating to saints other than martyrs are scarcely less prevalent. Consider, for example, the allegorical dreams by which mothers are informed before the birth of their children that they are to be of extraordinary merit and glory. So Columban's mother saw a sun rising from her body that enlightened the world; Thomas of Canterbury's mother dreamed that all the water of the Thames was running through her bosom; while the mother of Æthelwold of Winchester was pregnant, a golden eagle was seen to fly from her mouth. It is a temptation to say at once that such stories are mere legendary variations of the annunciation of the Virgin, somewhat timidly put; but it would be unsafe to assert so much, since similar things are told concerning

the births of secular heroes like Theodoric the Great and romance heroes like Galahad. Another excellent example of these stereotyped happenings concerns the miraculous fashion in which bodies of saints were carried from land to land. The bodies of some, like Mamas, Julian, and Liberius, were even borne over the sea in stone coffins. It is noteworthy that possibly the most famous case of the sort, the arrival of St. James the Greater in Spain, was an invention of the ninth century. By still another formula such widely separated saints as Peter and Patrick overcame in the same manner the magicians who opposed them. Peter caused Simon Magus to fall to the earth, when he had lifted himself by devilish art, and Patrick, according to Goscelin's life, made away similarly with an unnamed Irish wizard. Not uncommonly the rays of the sun furnished support either to the garments of saints or to the saints themselves. Such a story is told in the apocrypha of Christ's childhood; it is related of Bridget, Dunstan, Kunegunde, Chad, and at least a dozen other saints.

The names of saints are responsible for certain other legends. So in Germany St. Augustine is invoked in cases of maladies of the eye (*Auge*), and in France St. Clara with the same purpose, because she makes a person *voir clair*. Undoubtedly, the later legend of Christopher, which represents him as bearing Christ across a stream on his shoulders, arose from a reverently intended pun on his name. For similar reasons Expeditus is the saint appealed to in matters that demand haste, and Hippo-

lytus became one of the patrons of blacksmiths. Such folk-etymologies should excite no wonder, when one remembers how it has always pleased the unlearned to find a meaning, consonant with its use, in any term that is not self-explanatory. Moreover, the tendency so to resolve the names of saints at one time became a fashion in homiletics. The *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine furnishes more illustrations of the habit than it would be worth while to count, often giving a double or triple interpretation of the same name.

A tendency akin to that of transferring legends from one saint to another, out of which all the phenomena just mentioned have grown, is that of localizing them in convenient and satisfactory places quite without regard to whether the saints there lived and suffered. There is probably no more deeply rooted tradition in Christendom than that which connects Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, and their followers with the establishment of Christianity in southern France. For the past generation violent and destructive warfare has been waged against this cycle of legends by the best-equipped group of hagiographers on the Continent, yet it still retains its host of believers, not only among simple-hearted folk, to whom the struggles of the critical world could come only as distant echoes, but in more instructed circles also. Though the legends have been shown to be a tissue of falsehood, the work partly of interested and dishonest churchmen, partly of popular imagination, and though no record of the tradition is older than the eleventh century,

it is still possible for writers to urge with ingenuous seriousness that Mary and her companions were the apostles of Provence. By disregarding certain points of chronology, they can forge a pretty chain of circumstantial evidence, based on the argument from possibility to probability, from probability to certainty, that makes the romance plausible enough. Above all, they place their reliance on such relics as the sarcophagus in the crypt of St. Maximin's near Aix, which is nothing else than a Gallo-Roman tomb of the fifth or sixth century. There is the ocular evidence, in reality both the source of error and its defender.

What more natural, indeed, than the desire to connect great works of nature, or of a by-gone age, with heroes of the past? Both are humanized in the process. If a hero of the same locality be not at hand, there is no difficulty about transplanting one. Popular invention has no more to do with space than with time. Moreover, it deals thus largely not only with saints but with secular figures and invented characters of literature. Consider the ancient sarcophagus which serves as the tomb of Romeo and Juliet at Verona, the burial-places of King Arthur in Great Britain, or, to compare great things with small, the "Old Curiosity Shop" of London and the perfectly incredible number of houses in which Lafayette is reputed to have slept during a comparatively short sojourn in America. Is it, then, at all wonderful that St. Patrick should be connected with so many localities in Ireland; that the burial-place of St. Catharine of Alexandria

should have been believed to be Mount Sinai; that Italy, France, and England should each have a St. Michael's Mount; or that Cologne should possess the relics of the Three Magi and of the Eleven Thousand Virgins?

The questions as to the transference of legends from saint to saint and as to the localization of cult, which we have been discussing, lead quite naturally to a still more thorny subject — the relationship that subsists between pagan belief and the growth of popular Christian legend. Such contrary opinions are still held about the matter by the most enlightened and liberal scholars that it is very difficult to give the general reader an impartial view of the matter. Two principles must be borne in mind. First, we must remember that resemblance does not constitute identity; that because the characteristics of a particular saint or of a Christian rite have points of correspondence with pagan myth or observance it does not necessarily follow that the one developed from the other. In the second place, we may take it as an axiom that ritual always survives creed, cult doctrinal belief; heathen usages remained influential after paganism as a religion was uprooted.

With reference to the origin of the saints, it is necessary to recall that the cult of heroes was firmly established in Asia and Europe centuries before the advent of Christianity. Among the races of India and the peoples of classical antiquity, as well as among our own remote ancestors, the line of demarcation between gods and heroes was never clearly fixed. The mortal traits of the

dwellers on Olympus, and the confusion of the Germanic Beowulf with the god Beowa, sufficiently illustrate the fact. The equivocal position of this class of heroic beings, superhuman but yet of mortal genesis, undoubtedly corresponds to the position of saints in the Church. Centuries of belief stamped them on the minds of men, made them a necessary part of creation. Polytheism itself was but a delimitation, in one sense, of hero-worship. Now the earnest contention of conservative scholars like M. Delehaye, in combating the theory of such writers as Usener and Lucius that the cult of saints was an outgrowth of the cult of gods and heroes, is this: to postulate a survival of pagan belief is unnecessary, because it was the martyrs, and the reverence in which their relics were held, that gave rise to the doctrine of the intercession of saints and to the development of ecclesiastical legend. Yet even M. Delehaye has to admit that the cult of heroes predisposed men to accept the cult of saints. Indeed, the presence of the one could not fail to influence the growth of the other. It is justifiable to conclude, therefore, that there was a causal connection between the two, even though the identification of particular saints with gods or heroes must not be accepted incautiously.

With reference to this matter, it is important to remember that the attitude of the Church towards the customs of converted races has generally been both liberal and wise. The missionaries of Catholicism, in all centuries, have tried, wherever possible, to adapt pagan rites to their religion instead of attempting to uproot them

wholesale. When met by wizardry, they adopted tactics which made them appear to the people as medicine-men of greater power. This probably accounts for the thaumaturgical element in the legends of great missionaries like St. Peter, St. Gregory of Tours, St. Columban, or St. Patrick. When they found feasts with harmless ceremonies, which were held on approximately the same dates as Christian festivals, they permitted their converts to have a free hand in the celebration of the holy days. Amalgamation of customs would inevitably take place. It is unjust and unscholarly to say that Christmas and Easter are nothing but heathen festivals transformed, simply because certain observances of them recall pagan celebrations of similar date. Once established, any Christian feast would attract the pagan rites customary to that period of the year. Naïve testimony to a partial recognition of this state of things on the part of a mediæval author is to be found in the legend of St. Mark, written by an anonymous Gloucestershire monk in the thirteenth century. What he says, put into modern English, is this: —

On his day men fast through all the land; for himself is it not,
But for reverence of the banners that on that day are forth brought;
For men bear them about each year, as the meaning thereof is,
To pray for the harvest of the earth, that it may well come forth.

This is nothing else than the blessing of the crops, the spring-time feast, joined to the celebration of St. Mark on the twenty-fifth of April. Even when they would, the priests were not always able to destroy old observances

and beliefs, which accounts for many a dark page in the history of superstition as well as for many a pleasing survival of primitive custom.

Though we cannot say that feasts on the same dates or that churches on the same sites are sufficient in every case to establish the identity of saints with gods or heroes, it is perfectly certain that many saints took over the attributes and legends which had been attached to such forbears. It is better not to say, as does Mr. Hartland in *The Legend of Perseus*, that "the church has converted and baptized the pagan hero Perseus" in the person of St. George; it is wiser to put it that the legend of the latter absorbed elements from the story of the heroic dragon-slayer. The resemblance is more than fortuitous; there is a real connection between the two. Similarly Danae and her tower of brass furnished material for the legend of St. Barbara; the myth of the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, was the progenitor of the legend of the good physicians, Cosmo and Damian; and the story of Epimenides has essential likeness to the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. The Discovery of the True Cross, in like manner, has as one of its prototypes Plutarch's account of the translation of Theseus. So the story of Œdipus became attached to three such well-known figures as Gregory the Great, Alban, and Julian the Hospitaller, as well as to less conspicuous saints. In all such cases, of course, the adaptation was the work of popular tradition, slow sometimes, but tenacious of memory.

Whole groups of legends have sometimes been formed by this means. The example, at once most conspicuous and most debated, is attached to the various names of Pelagia, Marina, Margaret, Eugenia, Euphrosyne, Theodora, Apollinaria, Thais, Mary of Egypt, Papula, Eudocia, and Afra. The stories told of these persons, some of whom are undoubtedly real and some fictitious, are of two sorts. On the one hand, there are accounts of a prostitute who was converted and became an anchorite; on the other, a woman who clothed herself in men's garments and lived either in the desert or in a monastery. Of some of the saints just mentioned both legends are related; of the majority, however, only one. Various modifications of the fundamental traits complicate the narratives in some instances but do not obscure the essential attributes of the tales. That a woman really existed, about whose life grew up the legend of a virgin in a convent of men, appears to be assured by a recent study of M. Clugnet, who makes her a Syrian of the fifth century. Concerning the adaptation of pagan material in these stories, individually, there can be no difference of opinion. Furthermore, the legends of the group of saints as a whole have an evident relationship to one another, shown frequently by similarity of name, and always by likeness of content. What is still a question for debate is the theory, first advanced a generation ago by Usener, that all these saints are merely reincarnations of Aphrodite or Venus, as worshipped in Asia Minor.

To enter upon a long discussion of the case would be

impossible. I can only draw the reader's attention to a couple of principles involved by the debate and give my own conclusions. In the first place, the advocates of Usener's theory have certainly not been careful to distinguish with sufficient clearness between the saints themselves and their legends. Even though it should be shown that all the materials of the latter were drawn from pagan sources, it would still be unnecessary to say that the Christian Church has for centuries been worshipping Venus, purified and disguised. The faithful have held in reverence certain women with purely fictitious histories, many attributes of whose lives may have been suggested by the knowledge, on the part of Levantine Christians, of rites and ideals which they abhorred. In the second place, the opponents of the identification of the group with Aphrodite, even M. Delehaye, are prone to forget the survival of cult and of popular tradition, which, even when they have lost their primitive significance, are capable of stirring the imagination. The legends of Pelagia and her compeers, to my mind, represent the profound change of ideals wrought by Christianity on the oriental mind. The stories could hardly have taken the form they did — and the form, though perhaps morbid, has elements of beauty — unless there had existed a substratum of remembrance of pagan belief. To that extent, and to that extent only, Pelagia and Aphrodite are one.

By all odds the most romantic case of pagan survival in Christian legend is that of Barlaam and Josaphat, who

are celebrated in the Roman martyrology on November 27. According to the Christian legend, Barlaam was a Persian ascetic, who went into India and converted Josaphat, the son of a king, whom he instructed by precept and example in the ways of Christian living. The work is ascribed to John of Damascus, who flourished in the eighth century, but it is really earlier and of unknown authorship. Back of this ecclesiastical form, which embodies the apologia of the Greek philosopher Aristides, as was first shown by Professor Kuhn in 1893, existed an oriental romance of wide currency and great age, which was written to inculcate the teachings of Buddhism. Barlaam, in point of fact, is none other than Buddha himself. Probably the book was introduced to Christian readers by its first translator purely as a romance of edifying tendency. So widely did it become known, however, and so seriously was it taken, that the two main figures were, after the passage of time, considered historical and received into the company of Christian saints.

Scarcely less romantic is the story of the development of the various legends that have to do with miraculous portraits, images, and shrouds of Christ. Perhaps the form of the belief best known to the reader may be the legend of Veronica, which relates how the napkin with which Christ wiped His face on the way to the cross received the impress of His features, was preserved by the woman who proffered it, and was later carried to Rome. Of this legend, or of the picture, nothing was known in Rome, as a matter of fact, until the beginning of the

twelfth century; but from the reign of Justinian (527–565) onwards there had been in circulation stories about images of Christ, of wonderful origin. Similar stories about images of the gods were known to the world of antiquity, going back ultimately to the worship of meteoric fetiches. Among the Greeks such fetiches early came to express the close relationship between the person and the figure of the divinity concerned. Belief in the existence and protecting attributes of heaven-sent images was, indeed, common to many places and periods before the Christian era. Back of such stories as those of the statue of Pallas Athena and of the Trojan Palladium there was the same essential notion that is inherent in the Christian traditions mentioned above. Popular belief seems to have clung to this idea and to have given it a Christian coloring. In its newer form there was frequently present the notion of actual contact between the image and the person of Jesus during His lifetime; but the versions differed widely from one another in their content. These Christian legends were apparently formulated, first of all, in Asia Minor. There the story of a mysterious picture was connected with the legend of King Abgar, who sent to Christ for healing and received a letter promising aid by means of a disciple. In like manner the legend of a portrait later united in the Occident with the legend of Pilate to give rise to the fabulous history of Veronica.

We have seen above how an oriental romance became, without much alteration, a Christian legend. Though the

matter has not yet been fully worked out, there can be no question that the influence of romances, chiefly those of Byzantium and of western Europe, on legend-making has been considerable. The difficulty lies in deciding whether a particular legend has really been influenced by a romance which it resembles, or whether the two have merely drawn upon the same non-literary source, some floating traditional tale. For example, the legends of St. Alexis and St. Eustace bear a marked likeness in manner and material to the late Greek romances, save that, like all of their kind, they have a sad instead of a happy ending. Alexis is a young man of noble birth, who deserts his wife on their bridal night, lives as a beggar in foreign parts till his sanctity is discovered to the people by miraculous means, returns home, and dwells as a dependent in his father's house until his death, when his identity is revealed through a miracle. It is supposed that a Byzantine original for this legend once existed, but that cannot yet be proved. The story of St. Eustace, the Roman general, who devoted himself to the faith in consequence of a vision, was tried by the loss of property and family, lived by the work of his hands, and was restored to family and position only to suffer martyrdom, has a similar resemblance to the later Greek narratives; but it really came from the Far East and was rather the parent than the offspring of romance. Yet both legends took form under the same conditions that fostered Byzantine romances and throve so exceedingly that they helped to preserve the type of narrative long after the

more purely literary product was dead. By the eighth century the knowledge of many such stories had penetrated the farthest regions of the western civilization, as is witnessed by the works of the Englishmen Ealdhelm and Bede. Indeed, the tendency of legends to follow such models had probably spent itself a couple of centuries before that time. Thenceforward, the legends thus created were pilfered by popular fancy or well-meaning writers to furnish forth newer legends; and the legendary commonplace, as I have said before, became rife. Though many pious tales were unquestionably brought back to the West by crusaders, the communication between the empires of Rome and Byzantium, between occidental pilgrims and the Holy Land, had long before been sufficient to account for England's knowledge of oriental saints. Western Europe shared, besides, the common heritage of wonders in the Old Testament, canonical and apocryphal. These miracles became everywhere the models for legendary imaginings.

The people of those parts, however, made an original contribution to the legendary type through their tales of epic valor and knightly love. Only in such circumstances could have arisen the later legend of Christopher, the rude giant who sought Christ because he heard of Him as stronger than the devil and served Him as a ferryman according to his ability. So we find Vivien, nephew of Guillaume d'Orange and himself celebrated in four *chansons de geste*, becoming a local French martyr under the style of Vidien. The heroes of the romance that best em-

bodied mediæval ideals of friendship, *Amis and Amiloun*, were transferred without change of name or story to the calendar of saints. Much that is noble in the legends of the Virgin proceeds from the notions of chivalry which prevailed in the world during the era of their formation.

In connection with the localization of legends, I have spoken above of the tendency to weave popular stories about monuments of nature or of a by-gone age; and, in noting the confusion of martyrologies, I have referred to saints who have come into being by a mistaken reading of manuscripts. A source of legend akin to these is found in pictures and inscriptions. The synaxaria of the Greek church give detailed descriptions of the appearance of certain saints that seem to reveal the knowledge of a contemporary, but are in reality founded on Byzantine manuals of painting, like the portraits of Trojan and Greek heroes in the spurious histories of Dares and Dictys. Similarly, it is clear that the whole company of martyrs, of whom legend relates that they carried their heads after death, the *céphalophores*, arose from a widely known form of iconography. The pictures of Orpheus charming the beasts doubtless suggested the passage in the passion of Eleutherius, that represents him as sitting on an elevated place and preaching to the animals which surround him. Later, the idyllic story was passed on to other saints, as when Bede in his old age and blindness addressed the birds on a moor. By some occult psychological transformation the same tale may have suggested to Francis of Assisi certain of his most characteristic atti-

tudes and actions. Sometimes a writer even gave credit to the pictorial source of his words, as when the author of the panegyric on St. Theodore, attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, called the attention of his hearers to the paintings in the basilica. Illustrations of the rise of legends from inscriptions are perhaps unnecessary, since they involve the same kind of error as those proceeding from the mistaken reading of manuscripts. I might cite in passing the romantic journey of St. Abercius to cure the princess possessed by a demon, which the researches of the Abbé Duchesne have shown to repose on a misunderstood epitaph.

Reference has been made to the transference of legends from one saint to another. In its most pronounced form this process was carried so far by hagiographers as to make an entire legend out of extracts from other lives, sometimes out of literal borrowings. Such mosaics, of course, come close to out-and-out forgeries, though it is not necessary to suppose that in the majority of cases the authors had any culpable intent. Plagiarism must be judged according to the literary ethics of each offender's own day. Furthermore, even where writers copied literally, they may have done so because they found an earlier life that corresponded in all essentials to the traditional account which they were to put into writing. Yet it is pitifully true that cases of intentional fraud stain the pages of the legendaries. For authors like the monk of Malmesbury, who inserted into the abbey's chronicle the account of Joseph of Arimathea's fabulous apostolate in

Britain, we need feel no tenderness of heart, though his story has enriched the literature of both England and the Continent.

The tendencies of growth, and the species of product, which we have been considering, were of different periods and, some of them, of transitory character. As a literary type, however, the legend reached its fullest development in the thirteenth century. In that splendid age, when the flesh and the spirit of men were so thoroughly imbued with life that neither the widening horizon of knowledge, nor the absorption with war and wealth, nor the enthusiasm for art, could withhold them from mortal combat, both the vocation for saintliness and the cult of sainthood found their completest expression. St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi represented the clashing interests of the century, but each possessed the same enthusiasm for the kingdom of heaven that other men brought to the service of the kingdoms of this world. In the history of English legend-writing, as in the history of the type at large, we shall see that this is the focal point. Never, before or since, has the miracle been so much in vogue, never has the impossible seemed so possible. It was fanaticism, imagination and enthusiasm unrestrained by reason, if you please, that fostered the growth of Mary legends and the mysticism so characteristic of the age; but the fanaticism was noble in origin and expressive of gloriously rich human vitality.

Prosy and matter-of-fact though it frequently is, the great encyclopædia by Jacobus de Voragine nevertheless

deserved the name that men bestowed on it — *Legenda Aurea.* The *Golden Legend* was representative of the thirteenth century in the same way that the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius was characteristic of the fourth, and the *Glory of the Martyrs* by Gregory of Tours of the sixth. These three great collections mark well-defined stages in the history of the legend, and each is worthy of praise according to its kind. Some may prefer the narratives of one, some of another, but all who desire knowledge as to what part saints have played in the world must be conversant with the three.

CHAPTER III

THE EPIC LEGEND IN OLD ENGLISH

THE early history of Christianity in England is involved in the obscurity that rests upon the latter part of the Roman occupation. At just what date and by just what means the conquering religion penetrated this outpost of the Empire can never be satisfactorily determined. Legend early busied itself to supply this lack of information, and with its wonted success. The English Church, like the Gallican, was made the fruit of apostolic labors; it was established by Joseph of Arimathea; it was founded in the second century by Pope Eleutherius in response to a letter from the British king, Lucius; or it was the result of the Blessed Bran's journey to Rome. Fables all, as we now know. Yet these legends, rest though they may on wanton forgery or false assumption, contain a slight residuum of truth in that they represent the evangelization of Britain as taking place comparatively early. From the evidence of Tertullian at about the beginning of the third century and of Origen towards fifty years later, though both speak vaguely, it would seem that the missions of the Church on the island had by their time made some progress. The legend of St. Alban, the protomartyr who suffered, according to Gildas and Bede, under the Diocletian persecution, is certainly apocryphal: Pro-

fessor W. Meyer has shown that the earlier form of the *Passion*, which was written in the first half of the sixth century, placed the martyrdom in the time of Severus. Yet we know that St. Alban, as distinguished from his legend, was venerated in the early part of the fifth century. We know, too, of the presence of British bishops at the Council of Arles in 314 and at the Council of Rimini in 359. Indeed, during the fourth and fifth centuries the Church was firmly established, even though it may never have won during the Roman occupation the complete adherence of both the governing and the governed races. It was visited by a great prelate like St. German, and it produced in St. Patrick one of the great missionaries of all time. We should remember that the first Christian emperor, Constantine, though he neither established his title nor accepted the faith till some six years afterwards, was initially proclaimed (306) at York — a striking indication of how intimately Britain was concerned with movements in the Empire at large.

As far as southern Britain was concerned, all this work was by degrees undone after the emperor Honorius abandoned the province in 410. The inroads of the Picts and Scots on the one hand, and of the Germanic invaders on the other, gradually overwhelmed the Church in the rising tide of barbarism. Although it is clear that the Celts held to their faith when driven westward or across the Channel to Armorica, it is equally evident that they had neither the energy nor the organization necessary to carry on missionary enterprises among the victorious

English. In the latter half of the sixth century, St. Columba carried Christianity to the Picts of the North and founded the great monastery of Iona; and there was constant intercourse between the insular and continental churches, which indicates a healthy zeal on the part of Celtic Christendom. But until the coming of St. Augustine, in 597 (the year of Columba's death), the English were left to paganism.

The seventh century became, then, the great missionary era. Augustine and his successors early carried their work beyond the boundaries of Kent, and in a few decades laid the foundations of what was to become the dominant branch of the Church of England. Though the work of Paulinus, one of the boldest of the Roman party, who went to York in 625, was overthrown by the death of Edwin, the equally courageous Aidan, a monk from Columba's monastery, renewed the mission with permanent success ten years later. In that same year, Birinus, who had been sent out by Pope Honorius, baptized Cynegils, King of Wessex. Despite the quarrels between the Roman and Celtic churches concerning matters of observance, the progress of the faith in all parts of the island was thenceforward rapid. How solid were its foundations is indicated by the establishment of monasteries which were to be for centuries grand focal points of Christianity. Hilde founded Whitby in 657, Etheldred began her convent at Ely in 673, the Saxons re-established Glastonbury in 680, and in 681 Benedict Biscop sent Ceolfrid from Wearmouth to head the new monastery of Jarrow.

The conversion of England thus fell upon a time when the legend as a literary type was fully developed in older parts of the Christian world. Most of the tendencies discussed in the previous chapter were operative, and nearly all the influences exerted by or upon saints' lives were already present, though they had not yet reached a climax. As far as foreign saints were concerned, the new Church, it would seem, had only to borrow narratives from its neighbors. These it could translate into one or another dialect of the vernacular, when a need of popular presentation might arise; and its store of pious narrative would be complete. For writing the lives of native saints it had models enough and to spare. They could be made in the same fashion as those of their foreign peers.

With such a simple programme possible, it is not a little remarkable that the first lives of saints to be composed in English should have taken a form unique in its conception and vigorously original in its execution. Although Ealdhelm and Bede, the two great English hagiographers of the late seventh and the early eighth centuries, who wrote in Latin, followed continental models with marked distinction and success both in verse and prose, the purely native product has characteristics that give it a place apart and a history of its own. Instead of copying foreign types, it ran into the mould prepared for the native epic. This form, the reader will remember, came to its highest point of development about the year 700; and *Beowulf*, the only heroic poem preserved to us in its entirety, can be dated with some assurance as a

work of the beginning of the eighth century. That the poetic impulse which produced the somewhat sombre and narrow, but very noble and ardent, native epic was in full force at the time of the missionaries' arrival is shown by the simultaneous production of two types of heroic narrative, the non-Christian and the Christian.

The literary movements of which I am speaking took place in the North. Whether any similar development occurred among the Saxons of the South, we cannot know with certainty. William of Malmesbury, in the thirteenth century, tells how St. Ealdhelm, who died in 709, was accustomed to gather his people about him after mass and by his art in minstrelsy make them listen to stories drawn from sacred history. He cites a work by King Ælfred as his authority for this charming tale. Unfortunately the book is lost; and we have only William's testimony that English poems by the West Saxon abbot and bishop were known to the great king, and that he regarded them as superior to all other poems in the vernacular. What they were like, and whether they represented a body of epic verse like that of the North, it is impossible to discover.

We do know, however, that the extant poems were composed in Anglia and, during the Ælfredian awakening, done over into the southern dialect. In Northumbria Paulinus, Aidan, and their followers met with a school of poetry (it would, perhaps, be better to say a diffused power of poetic utterance) which was soon turned to the service of the Church. From the story of Cædmon, told

with exquisite refinement of sympathy by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*, we gain our only sure knowledge of how this came to pass. Though somewhat adorned with legendary trappings, the tale makes it clear that during the rule of its foundress, St. Hilde, there lived at Whitby a simple-minded and unlearned monk, who composed various poetic paraphrases of biblical themes. Furthermore, there is little reason to doubt Bede's statement that this man entered the monastery somewhat late in life and never learned to read, but made his poems from what he could learn orally about the content of the Scriptures and the doctrine of salvation. Now, since Hilde died in 680, we have this curious phenomenon, too little remarked by students of our oldest literature: certain poems of Christian content and tendency were written at about the same time that the greatest example of the Germanic epic known to us came into final form — perhaps even somewhat earlier. The Christian references in *Beowulf*, which have baffled all attempts at disentanglement from the poem as a whole, serve to confirm this view. They are there because the author, though he told a story of pagan times, was himself a Christian.

The fact appears to be that the missionaries, on entering Mercia and Northumbria, found heroic poetry on the rising tide of development. They do not seem by their advent to have checked the flow; and, indeed, they may even, by bringing in the culture of an older civilization, have caused a somewhat inchoate mass of popular traditional lays to crystallize in the form of epics. Be that as

it may, the Anglian poets were at first so little influenced by their change of faith, which was in the beginning national rather than individual, that, when they sang of their old heroes, they did so with all the fervor of unbroken tradition. They recognized God as the ruler of the world; but they could not escape the thought of Wyrd, mysterious and immutable, who in utter darkness beyond the reach of any prayer wove the destinies of men. Those of the poets who, like Cædmon, chose to celebrate the deeds of the Christian heroes inevitably treated them in the manner to which they were accustomed. We have lost a priceless boon in the disappearance of Cædmon's own works, save for nine lines preserved by Bede; but we can see from the biblical paraphrases of the late seventh or early eighth century, such as *Exodus*, that the change from pagan to Christian themes meant to the poets a difference of subject only, not of spirit. To them the proper end of narrative poetry was to display the prowess of some hero, divine or mortal, in contest, achievement, and defeat. They idealized courage, boldness, force of will, and self-restraint. They loved the flash of weapons, the rude pleasures of the feast, the tension of effort in any form; but they loved not less the thought of cloud-hung seas and battle-fields strewn with corpses.

In a spirit like this the Anglian poets came to write the earliest lives of saints that English literature possesses. These poetical legends are few in number and unequal in merit, but they are alike in selection of material as well as in manner of utterance. They are, indeed,

episodes from the lives of saints, broadly sketched and yet highly adorned, rather than complete legends. They are unified by the singleness of aim that animated their authors: the desire to present a stirring picture of the triumphs of some great soul in contest with the forces of sin. If they can stimulate the imagination to grasp the meaning of the hero's life and can awaken a passion for the warfare of the spirit instead of the sword, they have accomplished their end. For the details of a saint's earthly life they care little, preferring to expand the bare outline with heightened description, with stern admonition, and with lyrical appeal. Thus they focus attention on the great moments of the saint's history, which they weld by fervor of thought and speech into poetic unity.

The making of these epic legends centres in the name of the poet Cynewulf. Although he is really little more than a name to us, as far as any knowledge of his life is concerned, the fact that he is the only poet of the period whose personality is even so far revealed gives him a peculiar place. By contrast with the anonymity of other writers, he seems very close to us and makes us feel that we know more about him than is actually the case. Probably this is the reason why modern scholarship has woven a little biographical legend about his name: a fabric of conjecture and ill-based inference. The truth of the matter is that we know him only as an Anglian author who signed four poems by curious acrostics in runic characters, which he worked into the body of the verse. Twice he spelled his name Cynwulf, and twice

Cynewulf, the latter being the form now universally adopted to describe him. In the eighth century he could use either style with perfect propriety, and he may well have been as indifferent to the particular form as was Shakespeare. Probably we shall never be able to identify him quite certainly with any person about whom we have knowledge in other ways. Of the various men suggested in this connection, however, a Cynewulf who was Bishop of Lindisfarne from 740 to 780 and who died in 783 is most likely to have been the poet. The period of his life, his place of residence, and the record of his career, as far as our meagre information goes, are not inconsistent with the theory.

Of Cynewulf, the poet, nothing is known, however, beyond what can be gleaned from his signed poems. That he was an Anglian and in all probability a Northumbrian, the form of his speech gives assurance. He wrote in the second half of the eighth century, as we know by the same means. He was learned, for he showed an expert's knowledge of theological dogma and such a familiarity with books as must have been unusual in his day. By the same token he is likely to have been an ecclesiastic, whether monk, secular priest, or simple clerk. The use that he made of his Latin sources might indicate that he was a member of some conventual establishment, where a considerable library would be at his command; but, as a bishop or other dignitary, he would doubtless have had equally ready access to works of piety and erudition. Taking into account the subjective

character of his poetic style — that in the *Christ* at least he dealt with high themes in a richly individual manner — it is somewhat remarkable that he told us so little about himself. Had he been indifferent to literary reputation, he would never have signed his poems as he did. He certainly did not seek anonymity, for he said, in introducing one of the runic passages: [1] —

> He may find in this place, the fine of perception,
> The man delighting in the music of songs,
> Who made this poem.

Yet his subjectivity does not imply much self-revelation. The only passage in which anything like autobiographical statement is introduced just precedes his signature in *Elene*. There he states expressly that he was an old man when he wrote the poem, and he hints at some spiritual experience that made it possible for him to understand and to describe the miracle of the cross. The lines following, in which the runes are imbedded, have been taken to imply that in young manhood he was the retainer of some lord and knew the transitory pleasures of the world from actual experience; but it has been shown recently by Professor C. F. Brown that these lines refer rather to the life of man before the revelation of Christ and contain no allusions to the poet's own career. Thus we are left without knowledge as to the outward events of his life, and have to be content with the intimations of character afforded by his poems.

[1] *The Fates of the Apostles*, vv. 96 *ff.*

Of the four poems that Cynewulf signed, three only fall within the scope of this book, for the *Christ*,[1] his masterpiece, is a rhapsodical epic rather than an epic legend. *Juliana*, *Elene*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*, though of varying literary excellence, fairly represent not only his genius but the English legendary type at this period. Of the order in which they were composed we know nothing, save that the poet regarded himself as old at the time when he wrote the epilogue of *Elene*. On grounds of poetic merit, however, *Juliana* is generally regarded as earlier in date than Cynewulf's other works. Certainly it is cruder and less successful as a narrative poem than *Elene*, and may with propriety be first considered in a discussion of the legendary type which it represents.

The great importance of *Juliana* resides, as a matter of fact, in the extent of its departure from the method and manner of Latin legends. Although the particular form of the *Acta S. Julianæ* from which Cynewulf drew his material has unfortunately not yet been discovered, it is clear that he must have treated rather boldly whatever source he may have used. The story of St. Juliana does not differ very much in kind or in content from the legends of many other virgins who suffered torments and death for the faith.

[1] I refer to *Christ* as a single poem advisedly, though doubts have been raised as to whether Cynewulf wrote more than the second of the three parts into which it is divided. His signature is found at the end of Part II.

Though she wished to live a maiden, Juliana was betrothed to Eleusius, whom she refused to marry until he should obtain the office of prefect, later adding the condition that he become a Christian. After announcing her resolution to her father, she was delivered over to her lover, who tried by blandishments, tortures, and imprisonment to shake her determination. In prison she seized a devil, who had come to tempt her, and compelled him to disclose the secrets of his master Beelzebub, till he begged for mercy. When she was again brought from prison to the place of judgment, she dragged the demon with her and humiliated him before the people. Again she was tortured — torn on a wheel, placed on a flaming pyre, and cast into a boiling cauldron; but by her prayers she escaped all these torments without harm. The devil reappeared, but took flight when she gazed at him. With prayers and admonitions she then submitted to the sword, while her lover and judge was left to ultimate destruction by shipwreck.

Destitute of historical verisimilitude and the interest of romantic adventure, this Latin story is characteristic of the baser development of legends. There was opportunity for psychological characterization, but the opportunity was neglected. In weak imitation of the genuine passions, though it is clearly a mosaic of other lives, this is a dry, hard record of events, a tale of distorted ideals and extravagant punishments. The only graces of which it can boast are the logic of events, the underlying spirit of self-immolation which from one point of view

makes all martyrdoms beautiful, and the brave acceptance of struggle, which is responsible for the single touch of imagination in the whole — the saint's combat with the fiend. Even these good qualities are not so well developed as to raise the legend out of mediocrity. With such poor material did Cynewulf choose to work, and quite probably he had no suspicion that the story was ill fitted to be the subject of great poetry.

The instinct of the true creative artist, however, led him to seize upon the elements that were capable of stimulating the imagination. These he elaborated at the expense of straightforward narrative, elevated and magnified them, and transformed a rather commonplace tale into a brief and crude, but vigorous, epic legend. To this end he expanded the opening scenes, devoting nearly a third of his poem to the record of Juliana's efforts to avoid marriage with Eleusius, and to her colloquies both with him and with her father. The saint's contest with the devil in prison, which was precisely the one episode suitable for such treatment, he enlarged still more. From being somewhat less than a third of the Latin source, as is evident from a comparison of the extant versions, it was made to occupy nearly one half of Cynewulf's narrative. Nor was it merely expanded in bulk: it became the central feature of the poem in interest as well as extent. As the saint compelled the fiend to reveal the secrets of his world-old contest with men, as he dilated on his terror of returning empty-handed to the "king of the dwellers in Hell" and yet begged to be set free from

the bonds under which her virginal purity placed him, the struggle grew in dignity because it was made typical of the age-long combat with sin. Juliana, from being a rather conventional figure, became a heroine of epic dimensions, rejoicing like some barbarian goddess in the discomfiture of her foe; strong to do battle and triumphant in victory.

In thus changing the emphasis of the story, Cynewulf gave it real dignity and power. The tortures that preceded the saint's death he recounted briefly; to her farewell he gave full space, as befitted the end of an epic heroine; and in the simple epilogue, into which he wove his name, he voiced his longing for her help on that day when his soul should take its mysterious journey to the court of the Lord of the Heavens. From start to finish he so moulded his unpromising materials as to give them vigor and life. A dull poem this has been called by the historians of our oldest literature, and even the latest editor of it seems afraid of expressing his admiration. He complains that the struggle with the devil is not presented with the vivid homeliness of the same scene in the Old French *Vie de sainte Juliane* or of the similar contest in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This is to misunderstand the meaning of the poem as completely as did the usually clear-sighted Ten Brink when he objected that Cynewulf made no effort to place "all the essential moments of the action in clear relationship" to one another. These things the poet did not do, certainly, and for the sufficient reason that he was writing neither a spiritualized *fabliau* nor a

straightforward tale. He was attempting to compose, not entirely without success, an epic legend. Read in the light of its real purpose, *Juliana* will seem to no critic, I believe, tedious or ineffectual. To ask of it anything but what we know as epic qualities is like seeking romantic emotion in the *Essay on Man* or metaphysics in *The Eve of St. Agnes.*

Faults the poem does have, even when judged according to its kind. There is a stiffness of phrase that betokens mechanical effort, a fumbling uncertainty of touch now and again that seems to reveal a poet not yet completely the master of his medium. On account of such weaknesses of style and of the evident inferiority of its material, *Juliana* must take a lower place than *Elene;* but it should be regarded as no mean achievement in heroic verse. Not only does Cynewulf boldly change the original story, wherever a better poetic effect is obtained by so doing, and give life and color to a conventional piece of portraiture, but, without sacrifice of dignity, he infuses human interest into the characters and lights up his narrative by references to local conditions. So the saint's father and lover lean their spears together when they meet for a conference; the devil tells how he stirs up gusty quarrels among men while they drink in the wine-hall; and Juliana is led for execution to a place outside the town "near the land's border." Nicodemia, in short, is represented as if it were a Northumbrian settlement, inhabited by Teutonic heroes in whom Christianity had not stifled racial custom and instinct. The epithets for

men and things, which are the characteristic trappings of Old English poetry of whatever sort, gleam from the rugged verse as they do in *Beowulf*. Though occasionally inept, they more often give the story a power and a tenderness that the Latin does not even suggest. What could be happier than the choice of the adjective "sun-bright" to distinguish the heroic woman who, to the poet's imagination, represented the triumph of good over the darkness of the world? Moreover, in the fiend's story of his wicked deeds, which he could not fully recount in the space of "a summer-long day," there is a lurking humor that lightens the severity of the tale without plunging it into buffoonery.

The undoubted superiority of the other complete legend which is certainly by Cynewulf, the *Elene*, rests fully as much on choice of subject as on treatment. The story of St. Helena's discovery of the true cross, which took form before the end of the fourth century, appeals to the romantic imagination as few martyrdoms have the power to do. Not only is there in it the stir of battles and of adventurous journeyings, but there is emphasized that mysterious power which brought East and West together in a common worship. As Constantine the Great came to be the symbol of a Roman Empire purified by Christianity, and so remained to the end of the Middle Ages, his connection with a symbol greater than himself could not fail to stir the religious feeling of all true believers. To Cynewulf, a poet on the boundaries of God's empire, the touch of mysticism and the full-blooded romance in

the story were probably alike attractive. The material was well suited to his ends.

As is the case with *Juliana*, we do not know the precise form in which Cynewulf found the legend. A recent comparison of his text with some twenty other versions, made by Professor Holthausen, showed that the Latin source must have been more elaborate than any copy now extant; and the investigations of Professor C. F. Brown, still more lately, have made it probable that the poet had before him a Latin text written in Ireland or by an Irish scribe. When the close relationship between the Northumbrian and Irish churches is remembered, this need occasion no surprise; nor does it lessen the poetic achievement of Cynewulf to show that he worked with a version somewhat less bald than the summary account of the *Acta Sanctorum*. It was not necessary in the case of this legend to alter the fabric or to change the emphasis in order to glorify and elevate the story.

The Emperor Constantine, while confronting the barbarians on the Danube with his army, had a vision of the cross shining in the sky, inscribed with the words: "In hoc signo vinces." Thereupon he had made a likeness of the cross, which was carried into battle before him. After he had defeated the barbarians and had returned to Rome, he learned the meaning of the cross and was baptized. When he found that Christ had suffered in Jerusalem, he sent his mother Helena thither to seek the wood of the cross. With a great company the lady journeyed to the Holy Land, called together the leaders of the Jews, and

bade them select men of the law to answer her questions. To the thousand wise doctors who came to her she rehearsed the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and commanded that they choose the most learned of their number to answer her. The five hundred then brought before her she dismissed bewildered, taunting them with their ignorance and folly. While they were taking counsel as to the meaning of her words, Judas told them that she was seeking the wood on which their fathers had suspended Christ. From his father Simon, and ultimately from his grandfather Zaccheus, the story of the crucifixion and subsequent events had come to him. After telling the story, he was brought into the Queen's presence and questioned by her privately. He was unable to tell her precisely the position of Calvary and was imprisoned for seven days, when he promised to discover the place. By means of prayer he miraculously found this and dug up three crosses, which he took to Helena. When she had made sure, by its healing properties, that one of these was the true cross, the Empress adorned it richly, built for it a church on Calvary, and had Judas made bishop under the name Cyriacus. She then sought the nails of the cross, which were revealed at the bishop's prayer, shining in the earth. These she sent to Constantine, to deck the bridle of his horse, while she herself lingered in Jerusalem to establish a day in commemoration of the discovery of the cross.

This tale, which he found an inspiration and a glory, Cynewulf treated with the mixture of objective realism

and subjective sympathy that marked his poetic style at its best. Though he had no need of making extensive changes in order to give the story epic value, he does not seem to have been hampered by too close adherence to the Latin source. He caught the inspiration of the narrative and transfused it according to his own fashion, obviously keeping the order and even the words of his original wherever they were fitting, and freely expanding passages that demanded greater breadth. Thus in the description at the beginning of the poem he pictures with manifest delight the gathering of the Huns and the Goths, the Franks and the Hugs, against the Roman power.

> Bold men were they, eager for battle,
> Prepared for the contest; their woven coats
> And spears were shining; with shouts and the crashing
> Of shields they uplifted the standard of battle.
> When the heroes together had gathered by kinsfolk,
> Forth fared the host. In the forest the wolf
> Howled his war-cry and hid not the omen;
> The eagle, wet-winged, on the enemy's track
> Lifted his shout. Straightway there hastened
> From camp unto camp the greatest of armies,
> Hosts to the battle.

Through the entire passage, descriptive of the battle and of Constantine's vision, there runs a strain of martial vigor for which the poet himself was clearly responsible.

Illustrative of the same tendency to dwell with epic concreteness on passages that permitted such treatment is the voyage of Helena to Palestine. Probably the sug-

gestion for a description of the journey was furnished by Cynewulf's immediate source, though none of the extant Latin versions mentions it; but the realization of it could have proceeded from no one less gifted with the power of seeing and feeling than was the Northumbrian poet.

> Then over the ocean they drove, the ships high-built,
> And the prows were foamy; they felt the shock,
> The beat on the hull of the billows' might;
> The sea resounded. Since or before that
> Learned I never of a lady's leading
> O'er the streams of the deep, the street of the sea,
> A fairer power. Plunged through the water
> With straining sails the hastening sea-wood,
> The leaping steed that strode through the waves.
> Happy the warriors, for their hearts were proud;
> The queen rejoiced that the journey was toward.

Translation cannot hope to preserve the brilliant movement of passages like this, which is far removed from the thumping step of much alliterative verse; it cannot give an adequate notion of the color and variety of the poem, the love for the world of sight and sound that is interwoven with imaginings that aspire to the eternal; and it can but imperfectly represent the clear visualization characteristic of the poem.

Yet through dwelling over-long on Cynewulf's more striking expansions I must not convey the impression that the *Elene* is a work of shreds and patches, wherein proportion is sacrificed to episodic glitter. Wherever increase of detail would have impeded the swift current of the narrative, there is no attempt to do more with the

material than to express it in the style proper to the time: to convey by striking metaphor and repeated epithet the dignity inherent in the story. Even the most expanded passages, the reader will note, are not pictures of scenes or of men in repose, but true epic descriptions with the stir of action, past and present, running through them. The conversations also, which make up towards half of the poem, do not hinder the progress of the tale, but substantially contribute to the effect by bringing scenes into clear focus or by relating deeds of the past that could not otherwise be absorbed into the body of the work. The longest single speech, that of Judas before the Hebrew council, well illustrates the success of the procedure. From the point of view of a patriot who is conscious at once of the errors and the doom of his race, he tells the story of the crucifixion and its sequel, which for the sake of completeness must somewhere be included. Whatever suggestions may have come to Cynewulf from his original — and even the bald version of the *Acta Sanctorum* reports the conversation with considerable effectiveness — he must be given the credit of informing both this and other speeches with life and poetic feeling. Indeed, in his version not only does the queenly dignity of St. Helena shine through her words, but Judas becomes a truly sympathetic figure, torn by conflicting emotions, the defender of a lost and unrighteous cause who generously welcomes a better day.

In such adaptation of his material Cynewulf reveals, I submit, no mean poetic ability. In the larger matters of

construction as well as in the power and beauty of his phrasing he shows a mastery that cannot be regarded as wholly due to chance. He was artist as well as inspired singer. To be sure, he sometimes fell into absurdities, even in the *Elene*, as when he used the conventional word *sige-beam* ("tree of victory") to describe the crosses on which the two thieves were hanged; and he failed to remove Helena's reference to the Trojan War as a matter of common knowledge among the Jews, which offends modern taste. Moreover, he did not always make his meaning clear. But these are faults to be pardoned in his case as similar faults are forgiven many another poet of honorable name in our literature. The great accomplishment with which he and his school are to be credited is that they gave a noble type of narrative fit embodiment in poetry.

The third of Cynewulf's signed contributions to legendary literature, *The Fates of the Apostles*, need not long detain us. Except that it chances to be preserved in the so-called Vercelli Book [1] directly after *Andreas*, and that it bears the name of Cynewulf, it would scarcely have attracted much attention as a work of literature or as a document in the history of culture. Because of these connections, however, it has been the subject of much debate. The runic inscription, long overlooked, was discovered by Professor Napier in 1888, which settled the authorship of

[1] One of the four manuscripts in which most of the extant Old English poetry has come down to us. It is preserved in the cathedral library of Vercelli in northern Italy.

the shorter and otherwise less important poem; but whether the inscription was intended to serve also as an epilogue to the *Andreas* has remained a question to which no certain answer can be given. It is safe, however, to regard *The Fates of the Apostles* as an independent poem: the English representative of those lists of the Twelve, giving brief accounts of their missions and deaths, which were circulated during and after the fifth century. These epitomes of apostolic history served the same purpose in a limited field as did the menologies for saints in general: they recalled the labors and sufferings of the founders of the Christian faith.

In one particular Cynewulf's poem differs from all other surviving examples of the type. It gives no dates for the feast-days, and thus could not have served the practical purpose of a calendar. It is really more like an elegy than a menology, depending for effect upon the cumulative iteration so beloved of poets, especially during the Middle Ages, when the *Ubi sunt* formula had its greatest vogue. Opening with a statement of the glory won by these "thanes of the Prince" and of their guidance by lot to their fields of labor, the poet recites their fate individually or by couples in from three to thirteen lines. By means of the device just mentioned he avoids the danger of making a mere catalogue and imparts a flavor of romance to the brief summary. Somewhat as the poet of *Widsith* suggests far-off lands and days of old, but with more art, Cynewulf in his series of phrases stirs the recollection to thoughts of the apostolic wanderers. In the

suspiciously ample and duplicated epilogue, which represents almost one third of the whole, he begs the reader to pray for his welfare on that day when he must seek, like every man, his unknown habitation; and he exhorts us to call upon the God of ever-during power that He may give us timeless recompense. Whether or not he should be literally interpreted when he says that he collected his material from afar, he clearly made the same imaginative use of it as in his longer and more important poems. Though his immediate source is unknown to us, we may be sure from the forms of the proper names which he used that he had read some Latin account of the apostles. Professor Krapp, in the most recent edition of the poem, shows that he probably had before him the list or lists from which Bede prepared his *Martyrologium*. *The Fates of the Apostles* possesses no extraordinary literary merit, but it is not unworthy to bear Cynewulf's name; and it has extrinsic interest as showing the devotional attachments of Anglia in the eighth century.

At one time or another, and by one scholar or another, so much anonymous Old English poetry has been ascribed to Cynewulf that one is driven to skepticism as to the value of argument from internal evidence. Yet the examination of such matters as structure, diction, syntax, and metre has had certain useful results. Even though it has not established beyond question whether Cynewulf wrote this poem and that, it has at least given increased knowledge of his manner, and emphasized the stylistic peculiarities of poems belonging to his school. Of the unsigned

works that have been attributed to him, only two fall within the scope of the epic legend: *Guthlac* and *Andreas*.

Guthlac, as has long been recognized, really consists of two poems, each provided with an introduction and a conclusion, each a unit. The first, which is now usually termed *Guthlac the Hermit* (vv. 1–790), describes the entire life of the saint: how he turned from the evil courses of his youth, sought refuge in the solitudes, endured temptations, and died. The second, or *Guthlac's Death* (vv. 791–1353), after reviewing briefly the fame and temptations of the hermit, narrates with great fulness of detail the circumstances attending his end. These two poems are the only examples preserved (however many may once have existed) of the epic legend with a native saint as hero. Somewhat curiously, considering the probable Northumbrian origin of both poems, Guthlac himself was a Mercian. From the *vita* by Felix, which is the source of all our knowledge about the saint, it appears that he came of noble stock, was a warrior in youth, became a monk at Repton in Derbyshire, and two years later sought a retreat in the wilderness. He found refuge first near Grantchester in Cambridgeshire and subsequently at Crowland, an island in the Fens of Lincolnshire, where he lived a hermit till his death in 714, overcoming the temptations of the devil and doing many wonders. Felix, who seems from the dedication of his book to have been an East Anglian monk, stated that he derived his knowledge of Guthlac from Wilfrid, Cissa, and Beccel, who had known the saint. Though there is little reason to doubt

that he gave the main facts of the life with substantial accuracy, it is clear that he formed his work and adorned it according to accepted models. Thus he borrowed from Bede's *Vita S. Cuthberti* both incidents and descriptive passages; and it is not unlikely that the entire text is a mosaic, of which Felix should be regarded as compiler rather than author.

All this has its bearing on the two poems in the vernacular, which I have mentioned. Both of them, I believe, were based on the Latin *vita*. *Guthlac the Hermit* has of late years been regarded as independent of Felix, the work of some one who garnered from oral tradition the story of the saint's career. A careful comparison of the poem with the Latin text, however, convinces me that the former is throughout dependent on a literary source.[1] Not only does it contain nothing, save part of the prologue and one expository passage, for which a parallel is not furnished by Felix, but in phrase it frequently recalls the Latin. Since Felix, as we have seen, was not wholly without literary forbears, it is manifestly impossible that the poet of *Guthlac the Hermit* could have taken all the incidents of the saint's dealings with angels and fiends from reports of his personal friends. He did not follow his source straight on; yet, despite his references to the

[1] This opinion is based on a fresh examination of the documents, though the details of the evidence cannot here be presented. I regret that in a review of Forstmann's *Untersuchungen zur Guthlac-Legende*, published in *Englische Studien*, XXXIV, 95 ff., I too hastily adhered to the contrary view.

evidence of men still living, he showed no independent knowledge — only the poet's power of moulding and organization. There is no reason, then, why we should interpret his statements that Guthlac "was tempted in times that men remember" and that "we are witnesses of these wonders" in quite a literal sense. The poet was but recalling the evidence produced by Felix, just as hagiographers have customarily done with their originals. Unfortunately, this dependence on a literary source leaves the date of *Guthlac the Hermit*, which has been taken as a certain landmark of the mid-eighth century, altogether doubtful. Not impossibly the poem may have been written by a contemporary or a follower of Cynewulf.

That Cynewulf himself was the author is not likely to be held by anyone, I think. The writer had not the power of interpreting a situation in apt and telling phrases, for which Cynewulf was so remarkable. In the focussing of events he was scarcely inferior, but he did not marshal them with the same clearness. Though he centred the reader's interest, as did Cynewulf, in *Juliana*, on the spiritual conflict and made the protagonist an heroic figure, he did not succeed in presenting the adventures of the saint with that combination of epic vigor and brilliantly metaphorical language which characterizes the *Elene*. At his best, as in the descriptions of Guthlac's hermitage in the fens, which had been the home of demons, or in the narrative of the saint's vision of hell (vv. 529–704), which forms the climax of the work,

he had moments of splendor; but he depended too much on reminiscent formula and descended too frequently into homiletic explanation, to be a great poet.

With *Guthlac's Death* the case is different. Except for one passage, which briefly reviews the saint's glorious career, his temptations, his care of the birds, and his visitation by the sick of body or soul, the entire poem is based on a single chapter of the *vita*. Phrase after phrase is taken up in order and expanded quite as a musical theme is developed by a composer. Since young Eve poured out the bitter drink for Adam, death has ruled over man. So to Guthlac in the waste came at the end of his days disease and suffering. To his servant, who visited him each day, he foretold his death and spoke words of comfort.

> My son beloved!
> Be not of soul too sad! I am ready now,
> Eager for the journey, for everlasting joy,
> According to my works in life to have reward in Heaven,
> To see the Lord Triumphant, my son so dear!

On the seventh day he felt the near approach of death "strong and terrible," and he commanded his disciple to go to his sister after his departure with messages of love and cheer. At the man's request to know with whom he had been wont to talk in the twilight and at dawn, he revealed the fact that he had entertained each day an angelic visitant, who had given him consolation. That day and all the night the holy man was guarded by the servant, until at sunrise he lifted up his hands, opened

his eyes, and released his glorious soul. The servant, terrified by the sound of angel voices and the light that encompassed the dwelling, mourning for his lord, took his boat and sought his master's sister.

In these scenes, which offered comparatively little opportunity for depicting action, the poet showed a command of his art that merits unreserved admiration. He had to depend upon situation, psychological analysis of the two characters, and description of aspects of nature that were in harmony with both, to rouse and hold the interest of his hearers or listeners. He had no hosting of armies or stormy adventures to relate, no splendid visions of heaven, earth, or hell: only the simple story of how a holy man fell sick, conversed with his servant about his experiences in the solitude and his expectation of heaven, and how the faithful retainer fled before the awful wonders that accompanied his death, to carry the tidings to the world. All this the poet treated with a directness that befitted the theme, making no attempt to deck it out with borrowed verbiage or to romance about serious things. Although the subject-matter was expanded with the utmost freedom, there is almost nothing superfluous throughout the poem. The impression that it gives is one of compactness. Yet this plainness is not due to poverty of phrasing, for nowhere does the verse sink to bald statement of fact. It is straightforward, but touched with the fire of imagination; and it rises, when there is need, to the heights of poetic expression. So upon the description of the ineffable glories of the saint's transit

to Heaven, of the music and perfume that filled the earth and air, and of the servant's flight, there is lavished such wealth of imagery as only a poet who loved the beauty of the visible world could have devised.

This was the poet's art: to paint in subdued colors against which the richness of a few scenes might be displayed to the greater advantage. Yet as a whole the poem is not sombre, for it is lighted by the saint's quiet joy in his approaching end. He is not regretful even for his sister's sake, though his stifled tenderness towards her comes out in his messages of farewell. The most pleasing feature of the poem is perhaps the relationship that is pictured as existing between the dying Guthlac and his disciple. It is not surpassed in beauty by the closing scenes of *Beowulf*, which tell of the devotion of Wiglaf to his lord, hard-pressed, mortally wounded, and dead. It preserves in noble verse one of the most exalted ideals of our early English forefathers: the dependence of man upon master and of master upon man. Nor is the merit of this performance to be attributed to the Latin of the monk Felix, even though the author of *Guthlac's Death* has been ignorantly termed a "slavish" translator. One has but to read the two works side by side to see how the poet has transmuted the base metal of his original. Indeed, to find an equally sympathetic expression of man's terror in the presence of the great forces of nature as is shown in the flight of the servant across the sea, it is necessary to go to *Lear* or *The Prelude*. Whether or not Cynewulf wrote the poem we cannot be sure, though

no one has shown that such may not have been the case. Certainly he had equal power of vivid description, a similar richness of phrase, and the same constructive imagination, in dealing with his materials. Quite possibly, as Wülker long since suggested, the lost conclusion of the poem may have contained Cynewulf's signature.

Even more celebrated than *Guthlac's Death*, and quite as significant in the history of the legendary type, is the *Andreas*, an Odyssey of the Apostle St. Andrew. Like the *Elene*, it has for its theme a romantic story well suited to epic treatment; and, more nearly than any other of the poems we have been considering, it approaches the native heroic manner of *Beowulf*. It tells a part only of the cycle of legends that grew up about the personality of the apostle as early as the beginning of the fourth century, representing specifically certain chapters of the Greek *Acts of Andrew and Matthew in the City of the Anthropophagi*, which is its indirect source. That it was based directly on a Latin version of the *Acts* has been proved with sufficient certainty, though only fragments of such a rendering have been discovered. With its wild adventures and extravagant marvels, which are as pronounced in the Greek original as in the Old English poem, it perpetuated the older stream of tradition respecting Andrew: an apocryphal history that was gradually revised into conventionality by the writers of the western Church. Indeed, the *Andreas* and a prose version found in the *Blickling Homilies* are the only representatives of the early form of the legend that have survived in the

languages of western Europe. Among the English the story had good reason for popularity, both because of the natural devotion of their missionary, St. Augustine, to St. Andrew as patron of the monastery in Rome from which he was taken to labor in the northern island, and because of their sympathy with the romantic voyages of the apostle.

As I have said, of all the examples of the epic legend that we possess, *Andreas* approximates most closely in diction and poetic adornment the native heroic poems. On this account it has been credited with a degree of literary merit somewhat beyond its real worth. In individual passages it does not lack dignity and beauty, but the narrative is not fused into any large unity of design. Though it glitters with barbaric splendor of phrase and rivals the best old Germanic poetry, pagan or Christian, in bold metaphor and imaginative description, it fails to subordinate the particular scene to the general plan as do *Juliana*, *Elene*, or *Guthlac's Death*. Could the poem be regarded as primitive, the work of an author less sophisticated than the *Beowulf* poet or Cynewulf, this lack of proportion might be disregarded for the sake of the untamed vigor that not infrequently characterizes folk-song. But in phraseology *Andreas* is clearly imitative, markedly conventional even among poems in which the formula is used without hesitation as an ordinary vehicle of thought. Furthermore, it is indebted to older poems, particularly to *Beowulf*, for the method of handling its plot. Though the framework was taken from the

Latin *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*, the situations were developed in such a way as to recall the adventures of the heroic Beowulf: a chieftain endangered, the sea-voyage of the rescuer, a victorious contest, and a safe return to the land of departure. In phrase and in structure, then, *Andreas* is reminiscent, in phrase not unsuccessfully so, but in structure less happily dependent.

After a brief introduction in praise of the apostles, the adventures of Matthew in the land of Mermedonia are recounted. Imprisoned and awaiting the pleasure of the man-eating natives, he prayed for help and was assured by the voice of the King of Heaven that Andrew would come to his aid. To Andrew in Achaia came God's voice, bidding him save his brother and informing him that a ship would be ready at dawn to convey him. At the haven he found the vessel, manned by the Lord Himself and two angels in the disguise of sailors. God bargained with him for passage-money but at length agreed to carry both the apostle and his disciples, as thanes of Christ, scot-free. Somewhat more than a third of the poem is occupied with this naïve bargaining and the subsequent tumultuous voyage. Once arrived, Andrew took counsel with his followers, heard their dream of Paradise, received instructions from the Lord, and saved Matthew — who thereupon abruptly disappears from the story. Andrew then rescued a young Mermedonian, who had been appointed by lot to take Matthew's place as provision for feasting, encountered and overcame the Devil in debate, and was imprisoned. After being tortured thrice,

the saint was miraculously healed, and, through prayer, raised a flood that rose higher and higher until the bold heathen begged for mercy. He then caused the earth to open and engulf not only the waters but the wickedest of his enemies. When he had brought to life the children drowned in the flood, he baptized the thoroughly converted pagans, established a church, and took ship for Achaia, while the sorrowing people watched him from the sea-cliff and sang a triumphal hymn in praise of God.

Wild enough the story is, and sympathetic to the temper of a poet whose Christianity had modified only slightly racial instincts of long standing. By the device of representing the apostles and their followers as thanes of the Lord, and the Mermedonians as champions of Satan, the author achieved a rough-and-ready unity of structure that is not ineffective. Upon the *comitatus*, the true heroic loyalty in life and death, he based all the relations of his characters. Unhappily he did not fit these Germanic trappings into the fabric of the tale, as a greater poet would have done — as Cynewulf did in *Elene*. There is much sound and fury with very little significance in many of the descriptions. Thus the Mermedonians attack the solitary and defenceless apostles with all the noisy panoply of war; the voyage of Andrew is developed to most disproportionate length;[1] and the night of snow and bitter cold that attends the hero's imprisonment, excellently pictured though it is, has no

[1] Contrast the restraint of the description of the hero's journey to Hrothgar's court in *Beowulf*.

such interpretative value as the terrors of the night when Guthlac died. On the other hand, matters necessary to an understanding of the story, like the cure of Matthew's blindness and his movements subsequent to the rescue, are strangely neglected; and points that called for treatment with epic breadth, like the actual rescue of Matthew, are passed over with unbecoming brevity.

This failure to realize the epic possibilities of the theme is the chief defect of the poem and marks it as the work of a secondary and imitative poet rather than of a master mind. On that account it seems to me improbable that Cynewulf was the author. To be sure, like other poets, he may have had his failures as well as his successes; but in his signed poems he displayed signal powers of marshalling events, an unerring instinct for the vital points of a narrative, and a gift of intense visualization, that are not evidenced by the gifted author of *Andreas*. The imperfect adaptation of Germanic traits to epic structure, which is at once the charm and the weakness of *Andreas*, is not characteristic of Cynewulf. In default of any clear evidence as to authorship, it is probably better to regard the poem as the work of some unknown upholder of the Northumbrian poetic tradition, a writer who was no mean poet, though he strained overmuch after striking verbal effects.

The poems above described are the only examples of the epic treatment of saints' lives that have been preserved to us among the wreckage of Northumbrian culture. They represent, one must suppose, a much larger

body of verse, which celebrated the heroes and heroines of the Church in true Germanic fashion. Ælfric, for example, at the close of the tenth century spoke of a *Passion of St. Thomas* in verse, of which we have no other trace. Although conjecture as to the extent and the content of these lost legends is idle, the specimens which we owe to the chance survival of a few manuscripts give good cause to regard the movement that brought them forth as one of the most remarkable in the history not only of English literature but of hagiography as well. They illustrate the vitalizing contact of Christian civilization with barbaric genius, and furnish at least one instance of old wine poured into new bottles to the advantage of both. By the noble and artistic form which their writers gave the legendary type, no less than by the inspiring poetic narratives which they furnished to a people just struggling out of barbarism, they laid both the Church and the English race under heavy obligations.

The epic treatment of Christian subjects was not confined to legends of the saints or to Great Britain. It was part of the larger movement in which various ecclesiastical materials were transformed by the Germanic muse, though nowhere except in England do the surviving monuments permit even a guess as to the course it ran. In Old English literature the so-called paraphrases of the Old Testament, like the older *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*, which are really heroic poems rather than translations, mark the first stage of the adaptative process. Cynewulf's masterpiece, the *Christ*, and the brief *Dream*

of the Rood, which may be his work, have the same characteristics as the epic legends of their time, though they are essentially lyrical, and mark the second stage. From a later time, the superb fragments *Judith* and *Genesis B*, the second a translation from an Old Saxon poem interpolated in the older *Genesis*, show how the influence of the movement continued into the ninth or even the tenth century and became, probably through English missionaries, international in its scope.

Two poems of unknown authorship and date (though they must have been written after Cynewulf's time) deserve particular mention because of the legendary character of the material on which they were based. They are the *Harrowing of Hell* in the Exeter Book and a section of a loosely woven series of poems in the Junian MS., which deals with the events that succeeded Christ's passion. So loosely woven is this series that, though it is collectively known as *Christ and Satan*, it has little right to an inclusive title. The section that concerns us may well be called the *Harrowing of Hell*, since, like the poem of the Exeter Book, it is based, even though at one remove, on the *Descensus Christi ad Infernos* from the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. In these two poems were made the first attempts to popularize material that during many centuries was to be part of the common legendary store of the English. These attempts were not, it must be said, extraordinarily successful. Of the two, the *Harrowing of Hell* from the Exeter Book, with John the Baptist as spokesman for the throng of captive souls, has the better

form and not a little dramatic tensity; yet it merely suggests, without rivalling, the narratives of Cynewulf and his school. The poem from the Junian MS., on the other hand, shows the weaknesses of the heroic manner with few of its compensations: its emotionalism is incoherent, and its formulæ have no power. Both were probably based directly on Latin homilies now unknown to us; and both were composed, it is clear, in the tradition of the great Northumbrian poetry but not by great masters of it. Quite possibly they show the havoc to the native literature that was wrought by the invasion of Norse pirates.

The ravages of the Scandinavian invaders, which began in 793, certainly explain in large measure the decline of the epic type, both Christian and pagan. As it was dependent on the Church in its origins, it suffered from the eclipse of learning that darkened England for nearly a century. Though the great monastic school at York, which had contributed Alcuin to the Carlovingian renaissance just previous to the beginning of the Danish incursions, seems to have retained for a time something of its power, Anglia's day of poetic and scholarly glory was past. The ignorance which King Ælfred deplored in the preface to his translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, and which he did much to dissipate, settled upon the land. If more saints' lives in verse were written, they have perished without record. The West Saxon revival of learning failed to kindle the old flame. The meagre relics of poetry from post-Ælfredian times that we possess show a lingering instinct for composition both on secular

and ecclesiastical themes, but little of the former power. A *Menology*, composed in the second half of the tenth century, served the useful purpose of a vernacular calendar of feast-days and imitated the phraseology of the old poetry, but it named no native saints and had no trace of originality. Among the poetical entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is one in celebration of *Edward the Confessor*, a workman-like scrap of verse but in no way so remarkable as the parallel entry which contains the *Battle of Brunanburh*. The Old English epic legend was dead.

CHAPTER IV

PROSE LEGENDS BEFORE THE CONQUEST

WHILE lives of saints in verse were being fashioned in a new and unusually interesting form by the fusion of native and foreign elements, the prose legend took its own course, following in somewhat pedestrian wise the well-travelled roads of hagiography. From the very beginning of the movement that evangelized Great Britain during the seventh century, there seems to have been a perfectly natural tendency on the part of the leaders to encourage the writing of saints' lives, according to continental models, in the official language of the Church. There was no reason, indeed, why these legends should differ in matter or style from those of other lands. The missionaries who came from the North had the learned traditions of the Irish Church behind them, while the followers of Augustine continued to cherish their fellowship with Rome. Both before and after Theodore organized the scattered missions of Britain, during the latter part of the century, into something like ecclesiastical unity, the island Christians in no wise regarded themselves as separable from the rest of the world. They manned the outposts of God's empire — that was all. They had the same faith and the same rites; they reverenced the same holy men and women; and if they were scholars, they read

the same books that gave comfort and delight to the Church at large.

According to the general habit, evidenced by the local martyrologies of all times and localities, the English paid special honor to certain saints. They would naturally copy or write lives of those martyrs and confessors whose cults were popular among them. They soon came to have saints of their own also, and they would wish to record the acts and miracles of these native leaders. To that end models were at hand: the monastic libraries of both the South and the North were well-furnished with books. Their scholars needed only to adapt, according to their own ideas of style, the written materials at their command. What they learned orally they could shape along lines established by the same well-marked tradition.

It is not necessary for us to pass in extensive review the great number of Latin lives of saints written in Great Britain previous to the Norman Conquest, since of themselves they belong rather to the history of general hagiography than to the English branch of the subject. Only in so far as they furnished matter to writers in the vernacular, or were the work of outstanding church leaders, or contained the records of native saints, do they concern us. I shall mention a few specimen lives from the seventh to the eleventh centuries to illustrate the course they followed.

Most notable of the literary productions of the Celtic Church in Britain is the life of *St. Columba*, the sixth century missionary, by Adamnan, who held the abbacy of

Iona during the latter part of the seventh century. Adamnan based his *Vita* on an earlier life of the saint by Cummian, one of his predecessors at Iona, but he treated his subject with great independence and charm. By virtue of his position he must have had access to all sources of written information about Columba, and he must have known from boyhood the oral traditions that had been preserved in the region of the saint's labors. Through his knowledge of western Scotland and the islands adjacent, and through his power of gathering picturesque detail, he was enabled to give his readers of all time not only a clear outline of Columba's life but a picture of the scenes among which the saint preached and wrought his miracles. The work is an admirable specimen of the biographical legend. Its author was perhaps overcredulous; but he was clear-sighted, and uncritical only with respect to powers invisible. He makes his readers feel the penetrating and flaming spirit which drove the saint across the sea from Ireland to found a monastery on the desolate islet of Hy, and to preach the Gospel among the savage tribes of the North. He shows the simple godliness of Columba's life: how he combined the gift of divination with that feeling for the actual which we call common-sense, how he dealt masterfully with sin and unbelief, yet gave himself with utter devotion to the care of his flock. There is a touch of humor in the relation of certain incidents, as when a monk, who had come to Columba with a newly made copy of the Psalms to correct, was told forthwith that a single *i* in such-and-such

a chapter remained undotted. The death of the saint is related with rare feeling and good taste. Adamnan's style is not free from the barbarous Greek derivatives by which the ecclesiastics of the time (and monks of Irish training certainly no less than others) exhibited their learning; but it is clear, and it has a measure of academic elegance.

Contemporary with Adamnan was a great writer of Wessex, St. Ealdhelm, who was abbot of Malmesbury and died in 709 as Bishop of Sherborne. He was educated in the best schools of the day, probably first under the Irish scholar Maelduib at Malmesbury — an interesting bit of evidence as to the influence of Irish learning in southern Britain — and later under Abbot Hadrian at Canterbury. Of all English-born writers before the Conquest, save Bede and Alcuin, he has enjoyed the most wide-spread and lasting renown. I have spoken in the previous chapter of his English verse, which has unhappily been lost. Interesting as are the works preserved to us, they scarcely compensate for the disappearance of the vernacular poems, whatever may have been the subjects treated in them. Two of his Latin treatises, only, deal with hagiological matters: *De Laudibus Virginum sive de Virginitate Sanctorum*, in which he illustrates the virtue of chastity by giving short biographies of holy men and women of every time and land; and a rendering of this prose work into hexameters. With a few exceptions, the saints mentioned in the two versions are the same. The chief interest to us in these laudations of the

saints is the wide knowledge shown by Ealdhelm, as well as the limitation of his interests. He chose his examples from among the heroes and heroines of the Scriptures and of the eastern and western Churches, but he included only one saint from Gaul, Martin of Tours, and none whatever from Celtic or English regions. His bookish tendencies are faithfully reflected in the list; and his learning merits the praise bestowed upon it by Bede: "erat eruditione mirandus." That he was also "sermone nitidus," according to Bede's further judgment, no one would now agree, for his style is essentially labored, pompous, and artificial — stiff with the pedantry of over-emphasized knowledge.

A greater writer than Ealdhelm and one of the greatest scholars of the Middle Ages, though he lived as a simple monk until his death, was Bede himself. The debt we owe him for information about the early political and religious history of Great Britain cannot be over-estimated, while his activity in a surprising variety of literary fields makes him the most interesting figure of his century. He was born in 672 or 673 and passed his entire life as a member of the double monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The account of himself which he gave at the end of his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* tells the story of his quiet life: "I was born in the territory of the said monastery, and at the age of seven I was, by the care of my relations, given to the most reverend Abbot Benedict, and afterward to Ceolfrid, to be educated. From that time I have spent the whole of my life within that mon-

astery, devoting all my pains to the study of the Scriptures; and amid the observance of monastic discipline and the daily charge of singing in the Church, it has been ever my delight to learn, or teach, or write. In my nineteenth year I was admitted to the diaconate, in my thirtieth to the priesthood, both by the hands of the most reverend Bishop John, and at the bidding of Abbot Ceolfrid. From the time of my admission to the priesthood to my fifty-ninth year, I have endeavored, for my own use and that of my brethren, to make brief notes upon the holy Scripture, either out of the works of the venerable fathers, or in conformity with their meaning and interpretation." This was written in 731. Four years later he died, chanting on his death-bed, according to the letter of one of his fellows, not only hymns of the Church but also this song in English ("for he was skilled in our native songs"): —

> Ere he travels the road he must take at the last,
> No man can be wiser than is well that he be,
> In pondering deeply, before his departure,
> How much of good or how much of evil
> After his death-day is doomed for his soul.

Aside from the commentaries and homilies, which Bede seems to have valued beyond his other works, this remarkable man wrote not only a number of scientific treatises but the histories through which he is best remembered by the modern world. He was, indeed, the greatest historian and hagiographer of his age. Before 705 he composed a metrical *Life of St. Cuthbert*, and fifteen or twenty years

later he made another version of it in prose. For both he used an earlier life by an anonymous monk of Lindisfarne. Evidently an enthusiastic admirer of the sainted Northumbrian leader, who twice fled from ecclesiastical office to live as a hermit on the desolate isle of Farne, dying there in 687, Bede was rather the enthusiastic eulogist than the biographer of his hero. He enlarged and exaggerated the stories of Cuthbert's asceticism and miracles, which he found in the earlier *Vita*, and he embroidered his narrative with rather too much rhetoric. His account of the saint's death, however, which he got independently from an eye-witness, was worthy of his pen; and in general he refashioned the cruder phrases of his predecessor into the polished and smoothly-flowing Latin of which he was master. Historically more important than the lives of Cuthbert is his work on the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, in which he wrote the biographies of Benedict Biscop, Ceolfrid, Eosterwine, Sigfrid, and Hwætbert. These men he knew personally, and he gave a succinct account of their lives without sacrifice either of personal feeling or of impersonal judgment. The fact that none of them has been canonized does not lessen the importance of the work to the student of hagiology: so Bede would have written of a saint whose deeds he could report at first hand.[1]

More important for the history of saints' lives, however,

[1] Bede used an anonymous work by a member of his own community as the basis of his *Lives of the Abbots*, but he could control all the facts from his own experience.

as well as for history of every sort, than the biographies above-mentioned, was Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. In it, while tracing the story of the Church in Britain, he had occasion to give longer or shorter notices of more than forty different saints. He wrote the work when approaching the end of his life, and he had at command a store of erudition such as no other man of his day possessed: knowledge gained from books in many fields, from men who had borne their part in events spiritual and secular, from close observation of humanity, and from meditation on the divine will. He wrote with ripe wisdom and with rare power of expression. In his pages he recorded the deeds and deaths of the saints, from Alban to Wilbrord, who had made illustrious the missionary era of the Church in Britain. Though he was perhaps over-fond of interpreting natural events as special manifestations of God's grace, he was not credulous in any bad sense: only so devout of temper that the supernatural seemed to him a normal element of life. The acts of the hermits, missionaries, abbots, bishops, and kings he recounted somewhat briefly, as was necessary in a book of so wide a scope; but he gave all the essential facts of their lives, and sufficient comment to make the reader understand the positions they held in their own times. Indeed, he combined brevity of statement with fulness of detail in a manner worthy of emulation by any historian whatsoever. In so far as modern scholars have been able to test his statements of fact, he has been found commendably free from error, extraordinarily careful in the

use he made of materials drawn from many sources. As a general rule he freely acknowledged his obligations to previous writers, though his very freedom from pedantry possibly kept him at times from citing names that we would gladly know, since his work was destined so largely to supersede that of his predecessors. Everywhere (save perhaps in his account of St. Wilfrid) his good faith is as transparent as his style, which is a model of good taste and quite untouched by any affectation of spurious classicism.

Aside from writing the works mentioned above, Bede translated from the verse of Paulinus a life of *St. Felix* the Confessor, corrected "ad sensum" a life of *St. Anastasius* which had been badly translated from the Greek, and wrote a general martyrology in which he embodied, according to his own statement, not only all the names of martyrs that he could discover but such facts as to their passions as he was able to collect by diligent study. This martyrology was, indeed, one of his best-known and most influential works. Unhappily it suffered so much revision in subsequent centuries, notably by Florus of Lyons in the ninth century, that Bede's part in the compilation, as it has come down to us, cannot well be determined. Certainly many entries in the surviving version seem foreign to Bede's spirit, but it would be uncritical on that account to reject them, as the most recent editor of the historical works is inclined to do. A poetical martyrology in hexameters, attributed to Bede, cannot be his, however, since it mentions facts that took place after his death.

The work used by Bede as the basis for his account of St. Wilfrid of York in the *Ecclesiastical History*, though he gave no acknowledgment of his indebtedness in this particular case, serves to illustrate the kind of biography ordinarily written by disciples of saints during the early part of the eighth century. It is a *vita* by Ædde, who in 669 was brought to Northumbria from Kent by Wilfrid to teach chanting, and subsequently was closely attached to the person of the tempestuous bishop, apparently accompanying him on his last journey to Rome. Wilfrid died in 709 after a career of more than forty-five years as bishop, though for much of that time he was not actually in possession of any see. Despite the controversies into which he plunged the Church of Northumbria, not wholly through his own fault, Wilfrid did much to establish the regular practice of religion in the North; and for five years of his life he labored as a missionary in Sussex and the Isle of Wight. Self-willed and impetuous though he must have been, he lacked neither zeal nor ability; and he found an eager defender of his romantic life in Ædde.

Although by no means so good a Latinist as Bede, Ædde wrote comprehensibly, and did not fall into stupid bathos, as the authors of that day were prone to do. Unfortunately he had no gift of portraying character and wrote a somewhat dry record of events rather than a sketch of the saint's personality. As far as a partisan could, he seems to have told a straightforward story; but he was little interested in Wilfrid's spiritual experiences and, on the other hand, was greatly concerned to defend

his patron's acts against the calumny of enemies. He was writing, be it remembered, not long after Wilfrid's death and at Wilfrid's monastic stronghold of Ripon. Ædde recorded few miracles: the commonplace wonders attending the saint's birth; occasional cures wrought during his lifetime; a case of healing by means of the water in which his shroud had been washed; and a couple of manifestations by flame and sky, indicative of his sanctity.

A *vita* of quite another sort, though probably written not many years later, is the life of *Gregory the Great* by an anonymous monk of Whitby. It illustrates the difficulties experienced by a sufficiently conscientious scholar in writing the biography of a foreign saint who had been dead for more than a hundred years. Although it is the earliest life of Pope Gregory extant and the chief authority for most of the miracles attributed to him by later biographers, it gives but a scanty record of his deeds. The author himself complained that he could not tell more about the saint's life because materials were lacking, and that he was thus forced to narrate miracles. To be sure, he justified his course by saying that many persons were accustomed to gauge the merits of a saint — "and not without reason" — by the signs he had wrought; but, no doubt with the notion of giving it greater historical solidity, he devoted a considerable section of his work to an account of the conversion of Northumbria and the life of King Edwin. In part he treated of things known to us also through Bede, but the correspondences are due to the independent use by each of the *Liber*

Pontificalis and Gregory's own writings. The monk of Whitby succeeded in making, despite the difficulties under which he worked, a most valuable little treatise, interesting not only for its information about the miracles thus early attributed to Gregory and about the history of Anglia, but also as the only surviving production of the great monastic school at Whitby. From it we should know, even if we had no other evidence, how remarkable a centre of enlightenment was the convent established by St. Hilde.

In the chapter preceding this I have spoken of the *Life of St. Guthlac* by Felix, but I mention it once more to illustrate how a writer of the mid-eighth century sometimes plumed a native saint with borrowed verbiage even while he gave with seeming accuracy the facts of his career. More original in treatment than this, and more interesting from the point of view of literature, are the lives of *St. Wilbrord*, the British apostle to the Frisians, which were written in verse and prose by the famous Alcuin towards the end of the century. Alcuin himself, the most illustrious scholar of the school of York, the librarian of that foundation, the founder of the school of St. Martin's at Tours, was a disciple at one remove of Bede. He wrote his lives of Wilbrord in the enlightened spirit to be expected of a man of his training and endowments — in the same temper in which he later composed his sketch of the great Emperor Charlemagne, his patron. He was panegyrist as much as biographer and did not hesitate, any more than his master Bede, about

paying as much attention to miracles as to other incidents. He cultivated a style more ornate than Bede's and was fond of quotations, but he had genuine eloquence and not a little personal charm of manner. His poem on the bishops and saints of the church of York, which doubtless owed something to Bede's prose *History of the Abbots*, furnishes another illustration of the urbane fashion in which it was possible for a learned writer at the end of this remarkable eighth century to treat the history of a church on the frontiers of civilization. Not altogether dark was the age of the self-possessed and polished Alcuin.

The ninth century presents another story. The Scandinavian invaders, who swept over England and well-nigh overwhelmed the Church in the renewed tide of barbarism, plunging the country into a weltering sea of blood and war, made for a time both the practice of religion and the cultivation of all the arts most difficult. King Ælfred's evidence as to the state of learning in his time, to which I have already referred, shows why we have so few literary monuments, either in Latin or English, dating from the century that separated him from Alcuin. The revival of learning that Ælfred instituted and fostered seems to have spent itself largely in copying older works and in translating Latin prose into the vernacular — a movement then first begun — rather than in producing anything new. Apparently the writing of saints' lives remained in abeyance, since we have few indications of Latin works from that period. In the second half of the

tenth century, however, the renewal of culture had progressed so far that fresh biographies of saints were once more in demand. English lives were written in large numbers, as we shall see, while native saints were again celebrated in Latin. Two of these *vitæ* will serve to illustrate the character of all.

In the year 981 a monk of Winchester, named Lantfred, undertook to write a *Translatio et Miracula Sancti Swithini*. The date we know, because the author stated that he was writing ten years after the translation of the saint's relics, which took place in 971. Lantfred knew nothing about St. Swithin's career and did not attempt to reconstruct his legend, contenting himself with an account of the means by which the monks of Winchester were made aware of the merits of the sainted bishop, and describing with considerable detail the miracles wrought at the shrine during a single decade. Taken in conjunction with Ælfric's narrative of the same events, written some fifteen or sixteen years later in English, the work possesses great interest for the history of cult, though Lantfred was deficient both in critical sense and in literary charm. He was probably intent only on recording the cures by which his monastery had gathered wealth and fame; yet he revealed much more than he proposed, for the turgidity of his style shows how necessary were the efforts then making to counteract the evils of ignorance. It is curious to reflect that he wrote while the enlightened Æthelwold, who built up the great school of Abingdon, was bishop of Winchester. The opening

of one of Lantfred's tales (discreetly omitted by Ælfric) may be cited to illustrate how easily the imaginings of simple folk were at that time accepted as fact. A citizen of Winchester went out to the meadows beside the river, one day, to look after his horses. He fell asleep in the afternoon sunlight and awoke to see two black women, like furies, who chased him towards the town. They were stopped by an enormous woman, clad in snowy raiment, who wounded the man in the right side and left him with scarcely strength enough to crawl to the city gate. He was subsequently cured at the tomb of St. Swithin.

Of a far higher order than Lantfred's work, both in a literary and in an historical sense, is the earliest life of *St. Dunstan of Canterbury*, which was written about the year 1000. The author, who styled himself B, seems to have been a scholarly continental Saxon driven overseas by some misfortune. He was a personal follower of Dunstan and a witness of many of the scenes that he described. His work thus belongs to the class of biographical legends which have historical value as well as hagiological interest. It is written in a stiff and pompous style, but it never sinks into absurdity, apparently because the author had no illusions as to his ability in writing. He was a devoted disciple of the great reformer and archbishop, to whom Church and state alike owed a great debt during the last years of Anglo-Saxon independence; and he was chiefly interested in showing what manner of man he had served. He traced Dunstan's history from birth to death, but he touched lightly on certain phases of it,

like the saint's monastic reforms, which, though important, would have come little within the direct knowledge of a man who was first drawn into the archbishop's circle at Canterbury. There is much likelihood in the suggestion of Bishop Stubbs that the stories of Dunstan's childhood, the accounts of his early temptations and visions, were taken from the saint's own lips, since they "bear the impress of the same mind, a mind slightly morbid and very sensitive, but pure and devout, void of grossness and grotesqueness." Indeed, though the life is full of wonders, they are largely subjective: contests with the powers of evil or clairvoyant visions. B's *vita* stands in marked contrast to the life by Adelard, written within the next decade, which shows how the saint had already become a hero of legend rather than of history, a worker of miracles rather than a man highly endowed with imagination, energy of mind, and administrative ability.

Legends in Latin thus followed the fortunes of ecclesiastical learning throughout the entire pre-Conquest period. They furnish an entirely trustworthy index to political and religious conditions. Of lives of saints in English prose, before the latter part of the ninth century, we have no trace. Presumably it was deemed sufficient, while the impulse to poetic production endured, to use the vernacular for verse only, which would appeal to the ears of the unlearned. Men who could read would be able to read Latin, and would prefer to use that tongue. The decline of the epic and the eclipse of learn-

ing during the ninth century brought about, however, an entirely different state of affairs. King Ælfred expressed his wonder that the men of a former day should have neglected to open the books of the past to the unlettered, and he himself did much by translating, or inspiring translation, to remedy this deficiency. One of his works, the translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, properly concerns this hagiological record. Though it was an adequate rendering of the original, the translator omitted and condensed wherever, as far as one can see, the matter seemed to him unimportant. Accordingly it is interesting to note the changes made in Bede's treatment of the saints: that, for example, the accounts of Gregory and Augustine were considerably reduced, and the activities of German and Columba passed over without mention.

From some time in the second half of the ninth century dates a vernacular prose *Martyrology*, recording twenty-one English saints among more than two hundred of foreign origin. The work, which is not only clumsy as to style but inaccurate as to fact, shows the depth of ignorance from which Ælfred rescued England. Except as illustrating the difficulty with which learning was kept alive at all during the wars of the ninth century, it has no importance. It was made in some monastery of Mercia, perhaps of Lincolnshire, as has been conjectured from the inclusion of three saints from that county; and it was certainly based on a Latin original, though whether it was a verbal translation or an abridgment has not been

determined. Yet at a time when very few men on either side Humber could, in Ælfred's phrase, "understand their service books in English or translate even a letter from Latin into English," this martyrology, crude though it was, must have been useful.

As we have seen, the Ælfredian revival of letters had no immediate effect in producing lives of saints. Whatever the cause, during the first half of the tenth century there seem to have been written very few legends either in Latin or in the vernacular. In English there is preserved a life of *St. Chad*, the Mercian bishop of the seventh century, which could not have been made later than 950; but it stands quite alone, a waif, and a very ragged one. It seems to be the translation of a Latin homily for use on the saint's day, which was in turn based on Bede; and it follows Bede's account slavishly, though often inaccurately. It was written in Anglia, as was natural in view of the restriction of Chad's fame at the time. That no worthier representative of the prose legend than this should have been left to us may be partly due to chance, but to all appearances very few lives were written until the Benedictine reform of the monasteries in the second half of the tenth century.

From the time of this movement, however, and probably on account of the revived interest in all ecclesiastical matters which accompanied the adoption by such monasteries as Abingdon, Winchester, Glastonbury, and Canterbury of the form of the Benedictine rule that had been established at Fleury, the writing of legends in

English prose became a much practised art. If we may judge properly by the specimens preserved, this activity produced nothing of great value, from the point of view of literature or of history, except for the work of a single author, Ælfric. However, certain translations of which I shall first speak serve to illustrate the lines along which popular devotion ran during the second half of the tenth century.

In Anglian territory was made a free translation of Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci*, which had served in the eighth century, or the early ninth, as the basis for two poems about the hermit of the Fens. From the fact that this prose rendering survives in two versions (though one is a mere fragment) we are led to suppose that St. Guthlac's fame had continued to be cherished at least in the midland counties of England. The translation avoids the bombast of the original, but it has no individuality of its own despite the liberties taken with the text of Felix. It could hardly have been made at or near Crowland, where the saint was buried, else there would have been added at least some of the later miracles performed at his shrine. As it is, the work merely indicates the general effort to spread the knowledge of popular legendary figures among the less learned members of the community. I may add that one of these two versions of the prose *Guthlac* seems to have been used as a homily on the saint's day.

The *Blickling Homilies*, also of Anglian origin and of about the same date, likewise include a half dozen legends.

These homilies are a collection of sermons in prose, preserved in a manuscript at Blickling Hall in Norfolk. The approximate date of the collection is assured by the statement in the homily for Holy Thursday, where the writer names the year 971. It should be said, however, that this date cannot be assumed to be exact save for the particular sermon in which it occurs. The homilies have received much praise as early examples of good prose narrative; but they deserve it only in so far as adequate translation may always be commended, for Professors Foerster and Napier have shown that their merit is due almost entirely to the Latin texts on which they were based. All of the legends save one, which deals with a foreign saint, are from biblical or apocryphal sources. There is an *Assumption of the Virgin*, an account of the *Birth of John Baptist*, a free and careless translation of the *Apparition of St. Michael at Mt. Garganus*, and an equally free but somewhat better rendering of the *Life of St. Martin* by Sulpicius Severus. They seem to be the work of various men, collected by the scribes who put together the Blickling MS. To a single translator are probably due a *Peter and Paul* and an *Andrew*, which are taken literally from well-known Latin versions of the apocryphal acts of the apostles. From the fact that two of the legends have been found in other manuscripts than that containing the homilies, it is clear that the desire for stories of the saints in the vernacular was not limited to any one monastery. If it be permissible to judge from the lack of explanation and moraliz-

ing, these translations were not made through the direct influence of the schools of Dunstan and Æthelwold; but they could scarcely have been written except for the Benedictine reform which those two great men did so much to promote.

Two fragments concerning the legends of the Kentish royal family during the sixth and seventh centuries, one of them probably written at St. Augustine's in Canterbury, show what interest was felt at this time in the history of purely local saints, and show likewise the impulse to make a record of them in English. These two fragments, which are quite unliterary in character, have a common source in Bede but are mutually independent: more than one monastery in Kent, it would seem, felt concerned with St. Mildred and her relatives, who had aided the missionaries in their efforts to establish Christianity in the kingdom of which they were the rulers. The same tendency to preserve in English speech the names of English saints is illustrated by a menology, usually entitled *The Saints of England*, which survives in several manuscripts. The writer, who, from the number of Wessex saints whom he cited, seems to have been a West Saxon, compiled a list of ninety men and women whose merits had raised them to sainthood. He gave no account of them, not even their dates, but after the manner of the primitive martyrologies merely recorded their burial-places. He headed his list with Alban and carried it in somewhat disorderly fashion down to his own day. That the work was regarded as being of per-

manent value is shown by the fact that numerous copies of a Latin translation of it, made in the following century, have been preserved. Because of its originality it does, indeed, possess far greater interest than the ninth century *Martyrology* previously mentioned.

On the other hand, the close relations that subsisted between the English and Gallican Churches during the second half of the tenth century are indicated by a fragmentary *Passion of St. Quentin*, a martyr of Amiens in the days of Roman rule. From the few lines left us (preserved in the same manuscript with *Beowulf*) the legend seems to have been a free but not particularly happy translation of a Latin *Passio* which has survived in its entirety. Unimportant though the fragment is on any other score, it shows that under the influence of a new discipline the regular clergy were beginning to introduce new cults in order to strengthen and inspire believers by the example of men who in neighboring countries had met death for the faith.

Although the works of which I have been speaking have considerable interest as showing the trend of devotion to the saints and the increase of knowledge that was taking place, they would be insufficient of themselves to mark the later tenth century as unusual for its production of saints' legends in English. The writings of one man, however, were so noteworthy that the last years of the century, at any rate, must be regarded as remarkable. The author in question was Ælfric.

The identity of this great man, whose zeal for the edu-

cation of his countrymen has been surpassed by no one in the long history of English letters, who united with his enthusiasm, moreover, very considerable learning and a certain grace of style, remained obscure from at least the twelfth century till the middle of the nineteenth. By the time of William of Malmesbury, about 1120, it had been so far forgotten that William spoke of Ælfric as the abbot of his own monastery, an Ælfric who afterwards became bishop of Crediton. In the era of the Protestant Reformation, and later, as scholars came to study the writings and personality of Ælfric, he was supposed to be either the archbishop of Canterbury who died in 1005 or the archbishop of York who died in 1051. Yet he could have been, it has been found, neither of these men; and he was a person of far less importance than they in the government of the Church, though in learning and in ultimate influence far greater. Born about the year 955, he seems to have been placed at an early age in Æthelwold's monastic school of Winchester. There he gained a knowledge of Latin, of Church history, and of theology that fitted him to become the greatest teacher of his age and a writer skilled in the use of both the learned and the vulgar tongues. Though he cannot be regarded as a great universal scholar like Bede, he absorbed such learning as had been provided for the apt student by the Benedictine revival of letters, and he acquired an intellectual enlightenment that was remarkable in a generation not much removed from the one in which, according to Ælfric's own testimony, "no English

priest could write or understand a letter in Latin." It was, no doubt, his realization of the abysses of ignorance which had engulfed his countrymen between Ælfred's time and his own that turned his energies of mind towards the spread of education rather than the increase of his own learning. He was capable, for himself, of distinguishing the true from the false, in matters of fact, but he was content to follow the teachings of his masters when it came to niceties of interpretation. In his own writings he professed the wish to give sound information without troubling his readers with subtleties beyond their grasp or with things likely to corrupt their faith; and he was not unsuccessful in so doing. A man of deep sympathies he must have been, broad-minded and intelligent, possessed withal of real fervor of spirit.

In 987 Ælfric was sent from Winchester to the newly founded abbey of Cernel in Dorset, where he was occupied in teaching the monks. How long he remained there we do not know, but we may assume with some measure of certainty that he returned to Winchester to resume his work as teacher and writer. During this period, in addition to the homilies of which I shall speak later, he composed treatises on the computation of time and other natural phenomena, wrote a *Grammar* and an elementary Latin reader in dialogue form, prepared a *Glossary* of Latin and English, and translated several books of the Old Testament. In 1005 he was sent to Eynsham as abbot of a monastery just established there by the Ealdorman Æthelmær, who had been his patron

and friend from early manhood. From this time till his death, which probably took place between 1020 and 1025, he seems to have found less leisure or incentive to write; but he made excerpts from Æthelwold's *De Consuetudine Monachorum* for the use of his monks, prepared an introductory work *On the Old and New Testaments*, added various sermons to his earlier series of homilies, and composed a Latin *vita* of his spiritual father, St. Æthelwold.

The writings of Ælfric that give him importance in the history of English legends are three series of discourses, the first two usually designated as *Catholic Homilies*, and the third as *Passions* or *Lives of the Saints*. Each series was designed to include forty homilies, running throughout the Church year, though several sermons were added by the author to the original number. The first two series were dedicated to Archbishop Sigeric and must have been completed between the years 990 and 994, while that prelate held the see of Canterbury. The third series can be dated between 996 and 998 by a reference to Æthelwold as a saint and the address to the Ealdorman Æthelweard, who probably died soon after that time.

Although the two earlier collections were designed for the instruction of laymen in the gospels appropriate to the Sundays and general festivals of the ecclesiastical year, while the third series had the express purpose of telling the unlearned what they ought to know "about the passions and lives of those saints . . . whom the monks honor with special services," all three have a similar homiletic tone. Between the first and second series there

is this difference: the first contains more scriptural narrative and exegesis, the second more history and legend. In the third collection this tendency is so far developed that most of the numbers contain narratives of the saints, though tempered with much explanation and moralizing comment. It will be seen that, as his work proceeded, Ælfric became more and more the story-teller, less and less the preacher. The same causes that led to this, one cannot doubt, made him use increasingly a rude form of alliterative verse as his medium of expression. His sympathy with the young, which appeared very charmingly in the dialogue of his Latin reader, no less than his passion for the proper education of the unlearned, which can be seen in many passages throughout his works, dictated his choice of the subjects and the style of treatment that would most captivate his audience. He had no fear, obviously, of popularizing.

In the two series of *Catholic Homilies* Ælfric told the legends of ten apostles, and mentioned, but did not narrate, the history of St. Thomas, because it "long since was translated from Latin into English verse" and because it contained one incredible incident. He also included such well-known legends as *Laurence*, *Basil*, *Clement*, *Dionysius*, *Benedict*, and *Martin*, as well as *Theophilus*, the *Apparition of St. Michael*, the *Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*, and the *Invention of the Cross*. In his second series he drew on Bede for certain legends of peculiar interest to the English, giving *Gregory the Great* and *Cuthbert*, and the visions of *Furseus* and *Drihthelm*. He

also gave in his third series a few stories of English saints — *Alban*, *Etheldred*, *Swithin*, *Oswald*, and *King Edmund*; but he made the most marked departure from his earlier choice of subjects by the introduction of women saints into his lists. Except in the case of *St. Swithin*, whose fame as a worker of miracles was but two decades old and had come under his personal observation at Winchester, he related only legends that could have been found in any well-stocked monastic library of the time. Certain narratives he used more than once, like that biography of *Martin of Tours* by Sulpicius Severus, which he translated with something like completeness in his *Lives of the Saints* after having told the story briefly in the *Homilies*.

Ælfric, though he called himself merely a translator, did far more than turn Latin prose into his own tongue. He was more than a compiler, indeed, as we ordinarily understand compilation, for he kept his mind alert against error, bad taste, and inexpediency — open to purpose and effect. The range of his reading was perhaps less wide than would be indicated by the sources of his material, since, as Professor Foerster has remarked, he may have found most of his originals in a few collections of legends. At the same time, he must be given credit for a vigor of handling that is most admirable. A legend never suffered from his treatment. Teacher he always was, as I have said, but a wise teacher who knew when and how to use pure narrative.

His verse, which is often scarcely distinguishable from

rhythmical prose, illustrates his talent for adapting a particular means to a given end. Far removed from the verse of the epic legend in all the elements of style, lacking characteristic epithets and sometimes even the alliteration inherent in the form, it yet differs from prose in the choice and grouping of words; and doubtless it had for its readers and hearers a charm difficult of perception by modern scholars to whom the laws of Old English poetry seem more immutable than they did to the men of the tenth century. In any case, Ælfric used his rhythm in a manner peculiar to himself, and gave to such legends as he chose to present in verse a form very interesting in the history of legend-writing. Greater master of prose than of verse he certainly was, probably the best writer in that medium, as far as English was concerned, before the Norman Conquest, but he was not unskilled in the art of poetry as well. His Latin, whether in prefaces to various English works or in his *Life of St. Æthelwold*, shows the same characteristics as the rest of his writing: simplicity, directness, effectiveness. Indeed, this *vita* of the man to whom he owed and acknowledged a great debt for enlightenment of spirit is distinguished from the mass of tenth century legends by the same qualities that make all his work remarkable. It is free from bombastic rhetoric, and it is distinguished by clarity of judgment and speech, while warm with sympathy and tender with knowledge.

In the opening years of the eleventh century was living a great homilist, whose name is inseparably connected with Ælfric's, though in the writing of legends he took

little part. Wulfstan, to whom I refer, was archbishop of York from 1002 until 1023. Of the sermons ascribed to him because of somewhat vague hints in manuscript collections only eight, as was proved by Professor Napier, can safely be considered his, though Dr. Kinard has since shown that seven more have such a marked similarity to the others that they may well be the work of the same author. None of the sermons proved to be Wulfstan's contains a legend: he was fervent in preaching as Ælfric was fervent in teaching, and apparently he found narrative no help to his earnest exhortation. Certain other writers, however, with whose work the scribes have mixed his, used the legend with considerable effect. In one sermon of the collection there is a brief account of the adventures of Peter and Paul with the magician Simon; in another there is a story, taken from Gregory of Tours, of a dead child who, through the merits of St. Maurice, was allowed to comfort his mother with song; and in still others there are visions of heaven and hell.

A few scattered legends from the eleventh century should be mentioned here to complete the history of the type up to the Norman Conquest. Some of them are mere fragments, and they indicate no important variations in choice of subject or manner of treatment after the time of Ælfric. Some of them, however, possess considerable intrinsic interest, either because they show what saints were held in special veneration or because they represent early forms of particular legends.

There is, in the first place, a group of stories from the

apocryphal gospels. The Irish and English Churches preserved these books, and obviously loved them, though the wisdom of Rome had for centuries been trying to uproot the more fantastic of them and to prune the remainder of their heterodoxy. Ælfric, who used the apostle legends from the Abdias collection, was aware of the faults of the apocryphal stories and long hesitated to translate the *Passion of Thomas* on that account. Other writers were less prudent. Thus we have preserved in an eleventh century manuscript brief fragments in Latin and English of *Jamnes and Mambres*, a legend that had been pretty thoroughly destroyed elsewhere than in England. The very popular *Pseudo-Matthew* was likewise translated in part, though in no distinguished fashion, giving the history of Mary up to the birth of Christ. Certain peculiarities of the version may perhaps be due to a Latin text different from any still extant. More important than this are three forms of a translation of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which could not have been made later than 1050. Christ's "harrowing of hell," based on this source, had been a theme popular with the Northumbrian poets, as we have seen; its continued popularity to the end of the Old English period is attested by this rather free rendering of the story. Two forms of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, an important early form of the *Veronica* legend, also exist, though they seem to be variants of the same translation.

Of interest and value, quite apart from its place among English legends, is the *History of the Holy Rood-Tree*.

Although preserved by the hand of a twelfth century copyist, it has been shown by its editor, Professor Napier, to represent a translation made in the eleventh century. No other version of the legend of the Cross in this form from so early a date is known to exist. The history begins with Moses and is carried down to the final disposition of the Cross by St. Helena. Presumably the merits of the Old English work are due rather to the lost Latin original than to the translator, yet it must be praised as a clear rendering of a highly interesting story. The *Discovery of the Sacred Cross*, which has the same theme and in general the same details as Cynewulf's *Elene*, is likewise an intelligent, if uninspired, translation from the Latin. Apparently the original must have been very similar to the text of the legend printed in the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum*, which possesses few of the traits adapted by Cynewulf so admirably to the purposes of his epic narrative.

The considerable range of reading that was open, even to the unlearned, during the eleventh century, is indicated by three tales from the *Vitæ Patrum*, which were translated by some unknown writer of the time who did not share Ælfric's scruples about opening the "subtleties" of that work to the laity.[1] Two of the tales are mere anecdotes from the *Verba Seniorum* which Pelagius put into Latin; but the third gives the surprising history of the Syrian Malchus, a renegade monk who was captured by Saracens and only after the most romantic adventures

[1] See his Latin preface to the *Lives of the Saints*.

found his way back to his monastery. In old age he told his story to St. Jerome, by whom it was recorded. Such a tale, even in a crude translation, would give the common men of England a breath of the Orient such as the earlier *Phœnix* showed them to be capable of appreciating. From the *Vitæ Patrum* was also taken a life of *St. Mary of Egypt*, which is found in three manuscripts of Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, though apparently inserted in the completed work by some later scribe than the original copyist. The translation was done at least after the manner of Ælfric and under his influence; yet because of the doubts cast upon its origin it cannot now be admitted into the canon of his legendary writings.

A somewhat peculiar legend is that of *St. Michael*, known to us by a single manuscript. It reviews the deeds and glories of the archangel in the fashion of panegyric, up to his dragon-fight. Though in prose, it has something like a refrain, recurring at intervals: "This is the holy high-angel Saint Michael." As to source and general treatment it still awaits investigation. A fragment of a *Life of St. Christopher*, preserved in the *Beowulf* manuscript, has no distinction save that it indicates a knowledge of the earlier form of that legend in eleventh century England, for it follows the Latin source closely and is written in clumsy prose. More interesting are the three versions of the *Passion of St. Margaret*, two of which only are extant. One of these seems to treat the Latin original with considerable freedom, although, as is often the case, we cannot be sure that we possess the text used by the

translator. At all events, the legend is told in a clear and fluent style, not unworthy of praise.

The lives of *St. Giles* and *St. Nicholas*,[1] found in the manuscript at Cambridge that contains one version of the *Margaret* legend, serve to show that these two saints, later very popular in England, were already the objects of devotion. The legends are written in good pedestrian prose and seem to be commonplace translations from Latin.

It is remarkable that lives of English saints should be lacking among these eleventh century legends. Osbern, who wrote a Latin *Life of Dunstan* in 1067, speaks in his prologue of certain lives of the saint which were burnt in a fire at Canterbury sometime before that date, and adds that English translations of some of them still remained. However, all of them seem now to be lost. Of legendary character is a *Vision of Leofric, Earl of Mercia*, which has by chance survived. This curious document, in sufficiently correct West Saxon, gives in reality an account of more than one supernatural manifestation to Earl Leofric, as well as some statements as to his holy manner of life. Most interesting is his vision of the bridge of souls: a borrowing from the *Vision of St. Paul*, which was to be popularized in Middle English times. Oddly enough, Leofric was shown St. Paul in priest's garb, conspicuous among the white-clad throng of the blessed. With regard

[1] For my knowledge of these legends, as well as of the *St. Michael* above mentioned, I am indebted to Professor Napier, whose transcripts I have read.

to all of this we have no further knowledge. The dearth of lives of English saints, indeed, is but emphasized by the existence of a *Life of St. Neot*, about the date of which there is much doubt. Not even Dr. W. H. Stevenson, who has sufficiently accounted for the intrusion of this Latin legend, with its famous story of the burned cakes, into Asser's *Life of King Ælfred*, has altogether explained the relation of the English *Life of St. Neot* to the Latin lives. Without much doubt, however, he is right in dating all of them after the Norman Conquest. The border-line between legends written before and after that invasion is as difficult to draw as in the case of other literary works. The changes that came about were not immediately operative, nor was the English vernacular immediately discredited as a literary medium.

CHAPTER V

NEW INFLUENCES: FRANCE AND THE CULT OF THE VIRGIN

PROFOUND as had been the influence of the Scandinavian invasions upon English life during the centuries that preceded the Norman Conquest, they had been in their effects reactionary rather than progressive. They enriched the island with good blood, contributed useful materials to tradition and important elements to the racial inheritance; but they retarded the advance of civilization by the havoc they wrought upon establishments of learning and religion. We have seen how England was pulled back into semi-barbarism, into abject ignorance certainly, during the ninth century and again during the tenth. After the Benedictine Reform, however, there was no further relapse, nor were the islanders ever again cut off from the religious and intellectual life of the Continent. Isolation, during the Middle Ages at least, jeopardized both religion and learning; only by keeping within hail of their fellows could the teachers of the Germanic world hold themselves steady against the tide. Thus England may be counted fortunate to have had done with the sea-rovers at a time when affairs of Church and state in Europe at large were shaping themselves for advance. Dunstan and his coadjutors, by their introduction of the

rule of Fleury, established a connection with France that the not very religious or learned dukes of Normandy were to strengthen in the following century.

Long before the Conquest, England was thus deeply affected by French influences on her ecclesiastical and educational systems. The decadence of the kingdom of Wessex and the political and economic conditions that led to the expedition of William of Normandy do not here concern us save in one respect: they were marked by a steady and apparently increasing tendency on the part of the clergy of England and France to regard themselves as friends and allies. After the Conquest the substitution of French prelates for men of native birth was only part of the Norman policy of control, but it served to strengthen the bond between the English and Gallican Churches. For the time being, of course, the intrusion of foreigners was bitterly resented. Numerous records of quarrels between abbots and monks show the difficulties that arose; and there is evidence of the contempt with which triumphant prelates from the Continent treated native institutions and native saints. Nor could it have been an incentive to general piety that Norman clerks found careers open to them on English soil, while the native clergy were held in subjection. Yet the influence of such abbeys as Bayeux, Bec, and Caen was doubtless, in the end, an excellent tonic for the religious establishments of the island.

The influence was, however, by no means one-sided. In some respects the English Church had long fulfilled

its religious and educational duties more satisfactorily than its Gallican sister. No other conclusion can be drawn, it seems to me, from the early rise of a religious literature in the vernacular on English soil as compared with the later development of such works on the Continent. The history of legend-writing, in particular, had been, as we have seen, both long and illustrious. Contrast with it the tardy beginnings of saints' lives in French.

A single manuscript preserves a life of *St. Léger*, and a *Passion* and a rude translation of a sequence to the honor of *St. Eulalia*, dating from the tenth century; a *Vie de St. Alexis* has come down to us from the eleventh. Aside from these works, the history of French legends begins only after the year 1100. As we have seen, the *Passion of St. Quentin* was translated into English during the second half of the tenth century. The earliest life of the saint in French, though he was a martyr of Amiens, was not composed till the thirteenth century. One must bear in mind, to be sure, that the oldest document in any Romance tongue is the record of the *Oaths of Strasburg*, exchanged in 842; but the Church in France does not seem to have realized, until a century later, that the vernacular might be used to advantage as a vehicle of instruction. In England, on the other hand, the Church had early seized the opportunity to widen its influence by making a literature for the unlearned. The early written literature of the English would have been far less important than it was, without much doubt, had not

the clergy from the days of Ealdhelm and Bede been so zealous for the instruction of laymen through the use of the vulgar tongue. Perhaps the very gradual development of the Romance speech from the Latin vernacular accounts for the difference. In England two apparently unrelated languages were employed, which might make the need of a popular literature more evident. Be that as it may, there is reason to believe that the close relationship resulting from the Norman Conquest stimulated the production in France of legends, at least, in a tongue that could be understood by all. In this fashion England may be considered to have repaid very early her vast literary debt to her continental neighbor.

This debt was contracted cheerfully and in lavish measure. Latin hagiographers from the earliest period of their activity in the West had been as busy in France as elsewhere. Gregory of Tours was, for example, famous throughout Europe, and, naturally, in England. Literary chauvinism, we must remember, is a product of modern times. Like every one else, the English borrowed quite frankly the cults and legends of foreign saints. After the Conquest, however, when the Normans became leaders of Church as well as of state, there was a marked increase of foreign influence. Though prelates may sometimes have scoffed at English cults, Norman clerks, with the vigor characteristic of their race, soon began to write the lives of both foreign and native saints in their vernacular as well as in Latin. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the period when the Anglo-Norman legend chiefly

flourished; and during the first part of that time it smothered, though it did not quite kill, the legend in English. Then came about the amalgamation of conquerors with the conquered. The thirteenth century, when the French writers of England were most occupied with legends — the marvellous thirteenth century, with its passion for scholarship and religion as well as for the shows of the world — marked the beginning of a new era in the production of English lives of saints. As we shall see, however, the Middle English legend differed in several respects from the pre-Conquest type; and it differed along lines established by the Norman clerks. Form and spirit were alike affected, although in the latter particular the change was due as much to the temper of the times as to Norman influence.

In some ways, of course, Anglo-Norman legends belong to the history of the type in England quite as much as do those in the native tongue. The spectacle presented is that of a bi-lingual country in which the ultimately dominant literature was for the time being under the tutelage of the literature that was destined gradually to disappear. It is necessary, then, that in considering saints' lives in English we take the French product into account at least in so far as it moulded English forms. Unhappily Romance scholars have as yet paid so little attention to the *genre*, even by way of editing texts, that anything more than a summary sketch of Anglo-Norman legends could be attempted only after a prolonged study of manuscripts such as my special interest in English legends has not yet

permitted me. Without the admirable bibliography of saints' lives in French recently published by M. Paul Meyer in the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, to which I am much indebted, it would be impossible for me even to estimate the extent to which the type was cultivated in Anglo-Norman England.

It was, without doubt, the same impulse that led the Normans to write verse romances and verse legends. Both types were intended for recitation or chanting; and both depended, for their charm, upon loosely woven incidents centring in a hero or heroine. They held the interest of the auditor, generally speaking, not as did the epic, because the story was modelled into unmistakable coherence, but by the beauty or power of the individual situation. Whoever reads either the romances or the legends of the later Middle Ages, expecting other narrative qualities than these, will find them both dull and barbarous. Situations and characters are highly idealized, though passages of crudely realistic description are not infrequently found. The tales of various origin underlying the romances lent themselves to this treatment with the same facility as legends. The resulting works were addressed to the same audiences in many cases, no doubt. A thirteenth century summary of penances, relying upon the authority of Pope Alexander III, excepts from the reprobation of the Church such *jongleurs* as "sing the deeds of princes and the lives of saints." Probably the legends had a wider, if not more numerous, circle of admirers than the romances, for they were beloved in con-

vent as well as in castle. All through the period of their popularity, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, the reciprocal relations of the two types, verse romance and verse legend, were intimate, and their effects on one another important. So much can be said with assurance, although the limits of the relationship have not yet been clearly marked. The legend of *St. Eustace*, as I showed some years ago, gave rise to a group of romances; Professor Bruce has on two occasions pointed out the influence of the strange legend of *Pope Gregory*, with its suggestions of *Œdipus*, upon the Arthurian cycle; and other borrowings of romance from legend are not far to seek. There was, it would seem, a shuttle-like movement of material between the two *genres*. In a similar way, their topographical and linguistic relationships are involved and somewhat obscure. Whether they were written in French or in English makes little difference, except that the form they took was established by poets who used the Romance tongue.

The body of Anglo-Norman legends in verse is remarkable. We have preserved to us something like seventy-five poems in French, written on English soil, dealing with the lives or miracles of about fifty different saints or biblical characters. This indicates an extraordinary activity in production, as well as a genuine interest in the type on the part of a very considerable audience. The materials of most of the poems were taken from what we may, without impropriety, call the common legendary stock. If we are justified in drawing any conclusion from

surviving specimens, as seems reasonable, we may believe that the life of *St. Margaret* caught the popular fancy more completely than any other legend. We possess no fewer than seven versions of her martyrdom, all but one of them written before the end of the thirteenth century. Poems based on the various apocryphal histories of Christ are scarcely less numerous, while each of several other sacred figures is celebrated in two or more independent poems. At least six saints of the English and British Churches before the Conquest were honored in verse lives by Norman clerks: the proto-martyr *Alban*, *Audrey* (or Etheldreda) the foundress of Ely, *King Edmund of East Anglia*, *Edward the Confessor*, the Irish virgin *Modwenna*, and the virgin martyr *Osith of Essex*, who perished in the ninth century. Two lives of *Edmund*, indeed, are extant, and three of *Edward the Confessor*. Aside from these works, there is a version of the marvellous voyage of *St. Brendan*, while five different adaptations of the *Purgatory of St. Patrick* by Henry of Saltrey are known to have been made by Anglo-Norman writers, the earliest being that done by Marie de France towards the end of the twelfth century, not long after the composition of the original work. As was natural, there were written also lives of the great princes of the Norman Church, *Thomas* and *Edmund of Canterbury* and *Richard of Chichester*. One of the poems on the martyrdom of *St. Thomas*, that by Garnier de Pont Sainte-Maxence, though not written in the Anglo-Norman dialect, was composed shortly after the archbishop's assassination and

has independent historical value, since the author came from France to Canterbury and gathered his information there.

The writers of these legends were, however, for the most part natives or residents of England, as far as we know them. Some of them, like Wace, who wrote lives of *St. Margaret* and *St. Nicholas* as well as a double poem on *La fête de la conception Notre-Dame* and *L'histoire des trois Maries*, about the middle of the twelfth century, were otherwise well known as authors. Adgar, towards the end of the same century, included several lives of saints in his collection of Mary legends; and in the early fourteenth century Nicole Bozon, who made an interesting book of *contes dévots*, was a prolific writer of saints' legends in verse. It is a suggestive indication of the audiences addressed that a considerable number of the poems were composed at the request of high-born ladies, just as romances were often dedicated to noble patrons. So Benoist wrote the early *Vie de saint Brendan* at the demand of Adela, the Queen of Henry I; and two anonymous authors composed lives of *Edmund Rich* and *Edward the Confessor* for a countess of Arundel and Queen Eleanor, the wife of Henry III, respectively. Legends were sometimes, at least, the work of monks and nuns, for we have preserved a *Vie de sainte Foi* by Simon de Walsingham of Bury St. Edmunds, a *Grégoire le Grand* by Anger of St. Frideswide's at Oxford, and a *Cathérine d'Alexandrie* by Clémence, a nun of Barking, as well as a *Vie de seint Auban* by an unknown monk of St. Albans.

Most of the Anglo-Norman legends in verse were written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, a form beloved by romancers also and borrowed by Middle English poets. Other metres, sporadically used, were alexandrines with varying schemes of rhyme, a combination of decasyllabics with alexandrines in couplets, octosyllabic quatrains monorhymed, and tail-rhyme stanzas of six lines. The variety of these forms, together with the great preponderance of octosyllabic couplets, must be noted, since the Norman poets were responsible for the metrical fashions in vogue among English writers during the whole period opened by the Conquest.

Besides the individual legends mentioned above, the Anglo-Normans possessed a translation in verse of two books of the *Vitæ Patrum*. It was made in the thirteenth century by a templar of Bruer Temple in Lincolnshire, who was likewise the author of poems on the *Antichrist* legend and the *Vision of St. Paul*. Like Ælfric, he judged parts of his original to be ill-adapted for the knowledge of laymen and used his discretion in omitting various incidents. He was not an accomplished man of letters, as is shown by the awkwardness of his style and the irregularity of his alexandrines; but his work possesses extrinsic interest as representing the only attempt, so far as is known, to make a straightforward translation of any considerable part of the *Vitæ Patrum* into French verse.

Unlike the legends in verse, the French lives of saints in prose, the composition of which began in the early

thirteenth century, soon came to be collected into groups. Whether or not separately written, most of them have been preserved to us only in these collections, arranged either in something like hierarchical order or according to the calendar. As far as present knowledge goes, the legendaries with an arrangement according to the calendar were confined to the mainland, while the prose lives that circulated among the Normans in England were all contained in collections with the hierarchical arrangement. Four of these legendaries, allied in content or identical with works produced in France, are known to have been made in England. They were manifestly intended for private reading, and for that only, by persons seeking instruction and edification. They possess, indeed, more hagiographical than literary interest, although they doubtless gave their early readers a certain form of pleasure. The influence probably exerted by them on the arrangement of one of the English legendaries to be treated in the next chapter is the excuse for my emphasis on them here.

Another collection that must be mentioned for the same reason is a huge work in verse, written about 1250. This is the *Miroir* or *Evangiles des Domees* by Robert de Gretham, who was probably likewise the author of an explanation of the sacraments in verse, entitled *Corset*, which he dedicated, as chaplain, to his lord Alain. The *Miroir* was dedicated to a Lady Aline, presumably the wife of Alain. The book is of portentous length, running to more than twenty thousand verses in octosyllabic

rhyming couplets. Beginning with the first Sunday in Advent, it contains homilies for the entire course of the dominical year, and for certain great feast-days. Each homily consists of a paraphrase of the gospel appointed for the day and an explanation of it in the analogical style of exposition then in vogue among preachers. About a quarter of the sermons are diversified by the addition of narratives more or less vaguely illustrative of the homiletic matter. These stories, which ally the work to such legendaries as Ælfric's first collection, are for the most part simple *contes dévots*, religious wonder-tales without addition of place or name. Four of them, however, may be classed, as I have found from an examination of the still unpublished manuscripts, among legends proper. There is an incident from the miracles of *St. Cecilia*, the *Vision of Furseus*, an account of the conversion of *Thais*, and an adventure of the hermit *Macharius*, the last two from the *Vitæ Patrum*. On the whole, Robert's work has no great literary merit; but his flowing octosyllabic verse is not unpleasant, while his paraphrases of incidents from the New Testament and his other stories are well managed. The influence probably exerted by the *Miroir*, as we shall later see, on one of the most popular collections of religious verse in Middle English gives it peculiar interest in the history of our native legends.

Along with the production of saints' lives in the Anglo-Norman tongue, the writing of Latin legends went on unchecked. Although they made no innovations in matter

or treatment that clearly differentiated their work from that of the pre-Conquest hagiographers, the learned authors of the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries were so prolific that they caused the earlier lives to be pretty much forgotten. In part they simply recast these legends in a new and, to their minds, more elegant form; in part they were occupied in writing lives of saints who had been their contemporaries. The latter works naturally have more historical worth than the others, and they also have more interest. Indeed, they compare favorably with the best biographical legends of all ages. The saints of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries bore a large share in the stirring movements of the time, religious, intellectual, and political; they were keenly alive; and, whether more absorbed in learning or in exalted meditation, in combating secular aggression or ecclesiastical weakness, they appear to us in the pages of their memorials attractively human. Their devoted followers, who thus pictured them, gave evidence of a spirituality and an acuteness of mind that were sometimes united in those fortunate ages. A few works, composed by outstanding hagiographers or dealing with remarkable figures, may be mentioned to show the drift of the Latin legend in England.

At the end of the eleventh century the fluent Goscelin was perhaps the best-known writer of saints' lives on the island. He was brought to England by a bishop of Salisbury, probably only a few years before the Conquest, and he celebrated the deeds of several saints of the native

Church in Latin which is gracefully ornate, if not in the best possible style. To him we owe lives of *Augustine of Canterbury*, *Swithin*, *Werburgh*, *Mildred of Kent*, *Edith*, and *Ives*, all of which enjoyed great and lasting renown. Eadmer, a younger contemporary of Goscelin and a native Englishman, is best known for his three works on *St. Anselm*, the great and lovable archbishop who ruled Canterbury from 1093 till 1109. Eadmer was the chaplain of his hero and wrote of him with outspoken loyalty and affection. He succeeded in picturing the man in colors that have not faded; he recounted the saint's long controversy with the secular powers with strict adherence to the truth as he saw it; he celebrated Anselm's merits and miracles with sobriety and good taste. Less praise can be given his other lives of saints, concerning *Dunstan*, *Peter of Canterbury*, *Odo*, *Oswald*, *Wilfrid*, *Edward the Confessor*, and *Bregwin* (mostly revisions of earlier works); but, whenever he wrote in prose, he expressed himself in a clear and simple style that makes his work pleasing in contrast to the turgidity of much mediæval Latin.

It is a point worthy of note that some of the most illustrious authors of the learned twelfth century regarded the composition of saints' lives as work suitable to their talents. So St. Ailred, successively abbot of the Cistercian monasteries of Revesby and Rievaulx, who was eminent both as an ecclesiastic and as a writer of religious and historical treatises, composed lives of *Ninian*, *Cuthbert*, and *Edward the Confessor*. Greater as an historian than Ailred was William of Malmesbury, whose *De Gestis*

Regum Anglorum gave him a reputation comparable only to that of Bede. His *Vita Aldhelmi* and *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum* are informed by the same spirit as his secular histories: they show an abounding vigor and a feeling for the relationship of events without much critical sense. John of Salisbury, one of the greatest scholars of the Middle Ages and by far the most accomplished Latinist in twelfth century England, was one of the early biographers of St. Thomas Becket. He had been a fellow student of Becket's in Paris, and remained devotedly attached to him throughout life, though he did not scruple to advise him in the plainest terms. Like his earlier life of *St. Anselm*, John's account of *St. Thomas* is brief; and it was similarly designed to pave the way for canonization. To us in the twentieth century the attitude of the great humanistic scholar to the great churchman is perhaps a little hard to understand. He had lived on the most intimate terms with the saint, both during the days when Thomas was a high-spirited and ambitious clerk and after he took upon himself splendid austerities as defender of the Church; yet he bore witness with undoubted sincerity of belief to the sanctity of his old comrade, and accepted without question the miracles wrought at Canterbury. His nearness to the man did not blind him, that is, to the significance of his friend's career. As a witness for the merits of Thomas and for the faith of his century he has equal interest. St. Hugh of Lincoln, who died in the last year of the same century, found a biographer and eulogist in another famous writer

of the time, Giraldus Cambrensis, as keen-sighted, witty, and bold a spirit as ever lived. He knew Bishop Hugh intimately, and in his *Vita* he gave a striking portrait of the noble Carthusian saint, though he devoted the greater part of his work to an account of the miracles worked at the tomb. His intent, like John of Salisbury's, was doubtless to help secure canonization for the fearless and outspoken, yet humble and holy bishop.

The biographies called forth by the deaths of St. Thomas of Canterbury in 1170, of St. Hugh of Lincoln in 1200, and of St. Edmund of Canterbury in 1240 deserve, indeed, special attention because of the light they throw upon conditions at the time. Aside from the French poem on Becket and the *Vita* by John of Salisbury, to which reference has already been made, there were written by the end of the century about twenty Latin accounts of the life or the martyrdom and miracles, many of them dealing with both. At least six witnesses of the assassination in Canterbury Cathedral set down in writing what they saw. We thus possess almost unparalleled material for a critical understanding of the events. Although these works give reports which are as faithful to truth as ocular evidence can well be, they are properly classed as legends: they display the attitude of mind on the part of their authors that makes the *genre* a definite literary type. They have, indeed, something of the interest possessed by the genuine passions of the early martyrs. St. Hugh of Avalon, as Bishop of Lincoln, was involved, like Becket, in controversy with Henry II, though he dealt

more prudently with the chastened king. Besides the sketch of the saint by Giraldus, we have a long life by his chaplain Adam, who was later Abbot of Eynsham. About St. Edmund of Abingdon and Canterbury, who died in France after troubles caused by the weakness of Henry III and by insubordination within the Church, we learn from several contemporary lives. His brother Robert Rich, his chamberlain Bertrand, his friend Robert Bacon, and the celebrated chronicler Matthew Paris all wrote more or less elaborate accounts of him, not to mention less important lives. Holier and more learned, though just as militant a defender of the Church, Edmund Rich was as characteristic a product of the thirteenth century as was Thomas Becket of the twelfth. The contemporary biographies indicate the differences of temper between two ages as well as between two men.

Of quite other character than the great ecclesiastics who contended with kings was St. Gilbert of Sempringham, who during the reign of Stephen founded the only monastic order that ever arose in England. Simple goodness marked him as a man above others, for he made no account of his birth and learning; and he lived a hundred years in the exercise of abstinence and charity. Before his death he had built thirteen monasteries for his order, which remained in existence until the Reformation. A *vita*, written by a canon of Sempringham who had known the saint, is a straightforward narrative of his career, without extravagance, without embellishment — such a biography as Gilbert would have approved.

No account of Latin legends written in England after the Conquest should omit the mention of two visions, which were first circulated during the twelfth century. To the *Purgatory of St. Patrick* by Henry of Saltrey I have already alluded. In its first form, written towards the end of the century, the visit of a certain knight, named Owein, to the church established by Patrick above an entrance to Purgatory is described at length. It is perhaps impossible for us, at this day, to estimate how far literal belief in the vision was carried; but it is clear that Henry of Saltrey intended to write something more than an idle tale or an allegorical exercise. Even less sophisticated is the *Vision of a Monk of Eynsham*, written by the same Adam who composed the *Magna Vita* of Hugh of Lincoln. In 1196 a young religious of Eynsham lay for thirty-six hours in a cataleptic trance and, on recovering, related the purgatorial torments that he had witnessed. There can be no doubt of Adam's truthfulness, as Father Thurston has abundantly proved: he set down the narrative of the monk as he heard it. Together, the two visions just mentioned give us an indispensable understanding of the religious feeling in England at the time. The enthusiasm of which they were born gave the later mediæval legends their peculiar character.

The influences upon the saints' lives that were to be written in Middle English, which have been thus far discussed in the present chapter, were largely dependent on territorial and political conditions. Forces of another kind were at work, however, which served to modify the

type, both on the island and on the Continent. England lay open to the Church universal as never before, and she was swayed by the same impulses that were moving Europe as a whole. The enthusiasm to which I have just alluded found expression, between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, in the remarkable development of the cult of the Virgin, which influenced legend-writing as profoundly as it touched the hearts of men. Mary had been paid the highest honors by the Church, to be sure, since the fifth century at the latest. She had feasts and dedications, and she was held in the highest reverence. Her history was treated with epic breadth in apocryphal gospels. In the earlier ages of the Church, however, she had never fired the enthusiasm of the faithful as she did from the tenth century onwards. In curious contrast to later visions of Mary is that experienced by Wilfrid of York in 704, as recorded by his biographer Ædde. St. Michael appeared to him, bidding him build a church in honor of the Virgin. After the year 1000, at the latest, there would have been no question of an angelic messenger: the Virgin herself would have appeared. In England, as well as in Germany and France, we find during the tenth century an increased attention to the cult. So St. Dunstan devoted himself, we are told, to the service of the Lord and of Mary; and holy men everywhere dedicated themselves to the Mother of God. This tendency became increasingly marked during the course of the two centuries following. Poems were made, more frequently than ever before, in honor of the Virgin. From their

foundation, at the very end of the eleventh century, the Cistercians showed peculiar devotion to the cult. The institutes of the general chapter held in 1134 provided that all the monasteries of the order should be dedicated to the Blessed Mary; and all their seals bore her image. The movement gathered force as it went, until at the end of the twelfth century the cult became, we are safe in saying, the focal point of worship. To the Virgin the hearts of all believers were lifted most naturally in prayer; about her name gathered a host of miracles of grace and help. In the thirteenth century, when such writings reached their highest development, the Mary legend was the centre of all legends.

The increasing mysticism of the time favored the movement. Though fostered by great men like St. Bernard, it was really a product of the same forces that made the leaders of the Church what they were. Men sought escape from the world or plunged into the pleasures of the world, according to their temperaments, with equal earnestness. For good or for evil they were greatly alive. The cult of the Virgin was a rival to the cult of beauty that came in with the age of romance. It represented a reaction against the worship of idealized womanhood: it was the Church against the world. Truly there was no deliberate attempt to substitute the one for the other. The two were, to some degree, the result of the same tendencies; and they were frequently united, or confounded, in the minds of their followers. Yet though they started from the same impulses, they looked in different

directions, the one towards the glorification of the unseen power of God, the other towards the glorification of His visible works.

The Mary legends themselves gave a loose rein to imagination and emotion. They were a stimulus to religious feeling, the effect of which can scarcely be exaggerated. Though they augmented the tendency to hysteria that was undoubtedly present in the thirteenth century, they were just as clearly, in their best form, a help to godliness. Along with the religious emotionalism went a tenderness that was uplifting and, like the similar quality in the knightly ideal, civilizing. Consider the legend of St. Edmund of Canterbury, recounted in the contemporary life by Matthew Paris. While a youth, Edmund plighted his troth to Mary before her image in the church and in the presence of his confessor. "And then he suddenly rose up, and placed a ring (which he had procured for this purpose) on the finger of the statue, and fitted it on, saying, 'To thee, O most pure Virgin of virgins, Mother of my Lord Jesus Christ, I vow, promise, and consecrate, the gift of my virginity. With this ring I plight thee my troth, and gratefully adopt thee for my lady and spouse.' . . . And after his prayer, when he wished to pluck off the ring which he had placed on the finger of the statue, lest it might be the cause of wonderment to the people, he was not able to do so, though he tried in every way he could." It matters little whether the story represents any real spiritual experience of the young saint, or is only an ancient tale in a new setting;

the effect upon legend readers would be the same, and altogether for good, one must believe.

Mary legends were, of course, as much a symptom as an influence. They indicated the excitement of the period, which found expression in a hundred ways. Politics was to the great ecclesiastical and secular rulers an eager struggle; learning was to scholars a pursuit of desperate importance; men of all conditions plunged eastward to defend the Holy Sepulchre, wave after wave of them, never counting the cost. However misdirected may have been some of the enthusiasms of the later Middle Ages, there is no hint of somnolence in those centuries. Within the Church itself, Cîteaux, the Grande Chartreuse, Cluny, and Clairvaux are names that indicate the prevailing impulse to righteousness; and throughout the thirteenth century the orders of Dominic and Francis stirred the flame. To all these movements Mary legends are an index.

Their degeneration shows the less pleasing aspect of mediæval life, for it again is characteristic. While the tendency to gather marvels about the figure of Mary was yet in full swing, many stories of a most unedifying character were so turned as to celebrate her power. They did her no honor and disgraced their makers. The vast collections of legendary anecdote in praise of the Virgin, which were put together between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, both in Latin and in the vernacular literatures, contain very much that is sordid, a good deal that is frivolous, and not a little that seems to us immoral and

blasphemous. Tales of this kind came from a variety of sources, but were chiefly of popular origin; they sprang from the same root as the *fabliaux;* they exposed the stratum of grossness that underlay the spiritual aspiration of the period.

For better and for worse the cult and legends of Mary influenced profoundly the writing of saints' lives from the twelfth century onwards. Legends in Middle English, which took their color from those in Latin and Anglo-French, can hardly be understood without reference to the movement just described. Both the great collections, which are next to be considered, and the individual legends, through which the general course of the type can best be followed between 1100 and the Reformation, are different from the corresponding works in pre-Conquest England to the same degree that manners, ideas, and aspirations differed. And the most important single factor in the change was the cult of the Virgin.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONQUEST TO THE REFORMATION. I

LEGENDARIES, AND SAINTS' LIVES IN WORKS OF HISTORY AND EDIFICATION

WE have seen how Ælfric, for the nurture of the people, made three books in English, narrating according to the order of the calendar the lives of many saints. We have seen that the same tendency to collect legends into series was operative among the Anglo-Normans, who set the literary fashions for England, in large measure, during the later Middle Ages. In no way, perhaps, can we so well appreciate the extent to which saints' lives were cultivated and the part they played in the literature of the time as by a survey of various collections in the English tongue which were current between the thirteenth and the late fifteenth centuries. They reveal an interest in the type that outran the power of expression, for the most part, but an interest so strong that an understanding of it is essential to a correct estimate of the temper, religious, social, and literary, of that interesting age. To the consideration of these series should be added a review of the saints' lives that are imbedded in the chief works of history and of general edification that were written in the vernacular during the same period.

The earliest collection in Middle English is that com-

monly known to scholars as the *South-English Legendary*, though the title is a purely modern designation. The work is a composite of such an elaborate nature that it has baffled the few attempts yet made to unravel the history of its compilation. It is preserved to us in no less than twenty-nine different manuscripts, sixteen of which contain (or once contained) complete series of legends. There is so much variation, moreover, not only in the order but in the actual content of the manuscripts that it is difficult to determine just what saints were treated by the original compiler and what he intended the scope of the work to be. The difficulty is increased by the fact that the oldest manuscript preserved (Laud 108, in the Bodleian Library) gives the legends without any attempt to put them in an orderly array. On this account, Dr. Horstmann, the learned editor of this version, took it to represent the original state of the legendary before completion, a rough draft of materials before any arrangement had been decided upon. This does not seem to me a correct statement of the case. The Laud MS., though so early, by no means represents fairly the original text, according to Dr. Horstmann's own admission. Probably it is nothing more than a random selection of lives from the original compilation, and of more value as showing what the legendary included before the end of the thirteenth century than what it excluded.

As the Laud text is the only one yet edited in its entirety, the student must make out the scope and arrangement of the work from tables of contents and

individual legends that have been printed, and from an examination of the manuscripts in English libraries. Until several more texts have been edited, it will, as a matter of fact, be impossible for scholars to reach very satisfactory conclusions about the genesis and the gradual enlargement of the book. What can be said with some degree of certainty is that in southern England, during the latter part of the thirteenth century, a writer (or perhaps a group of monks) undertook to versify a series of saints' lives according to the calendar order of the ecclesiastical year. In the words of the Laud prologue: —

> Though I may not tell of all, I shall tell of some,
> As every feast after other in the year doth come.

The language of the better early manuscripts, like Harleian 2277 in the British Museum, points to southwestern England as the region where the collection originated; and the double use of certain passages in the *Legendary* and in the chronicle that bears the name of Robert of Gloucester makes it appear that the Abbey of Gloucester was the place of its beginning. To the vexing question of the priority of *Legendary* or chronicle I must return.

At the moment, it is more important to notice the metrical form and the content of the earlier versions of the *Legendary*. The legends are written in rhyming couplets, prevailingly with seven stresses to a line, like those I have just quoted in modernized form. The scribe of one important manuscript, however, tried to shorten the verse to six beats, naturally without conspicuous

success. His attempt illustrates the freedom with which the work was handled by various scribes and helps to explain the complexities of its structure. The normal line of seven beats was probably an adaptation of Old English verse, with the substitution of end-rhyme for alliteration. It has a suppleness and a fluency that the older verse for the most part lacks, but it is not comparable in dignity and poetic beauty with the medium employed by the pre-Conquest writers. It cannot be said, moreover, that the makers of the *Legendary* had a mastery of language sufficient to give their rhythmical effects any great importance as poetry. The excellences of what they accomplished lie in other directions, as we shall see.

The purpose of the compilation in its first state is clearly indicated by the prologue from which I have already quoted: it was intended for reading in conventual refectories, as well as privately by persons desiring to combine pleasure with spiritual profit. I have stated in the previous chapter that legends and romances in verse served much the same ends and, to some extent, much the same audience. As romances tended to gather into cycles, and as several of them, even when unrelated in subject-matter, were often written in a single manuscript, so it was natural for prosperous abbeys to desire a series of saints' lives in convenient and accessible form. Patrons of letters, no doubt, sometimes wished such a collection for their own use, that they might at any time read or be read to concerning the life of the saint whose day it happened to be. The assumption that the compilation which

we are considering was ever used to replace sermons in the churches on the festivals of the saints seems to me quite baseless, though the statement has been frequently made that it was so used. With regard to the present work, the author of the prologue appears virtually to contradict the view. "All this book is made," he says, "of holy days and of holy men's lives . . . of whose lives when their feasts fall, men read in holy church." He amalgamates, furthermore, with his prologue a brief account of *St. Fabian*, which could not possibly have been read instead of a sermon because of its excessive brevity. Other lives, on the contrary, are related at such great length that their use in church would be inconceivable. A homiletic discourse must, after all, be limited in length. As a matter of fact, the purpose of any legendary has to be determined by its characteristics; and this South-English collection was clearly intended for conventual and private use.

The work in its original form, if I am not mistaken in my inferences, consisted of between ninety and a hundred legends, beginning with the celebrations of the Circumcision and Epiphany and ending with the festival of St. Thomas of Canterbury on December 31. It included lives of the most celebrated Celtic and Anglo-Saxon saints; but about five-sixths of the entries are for days observed throughout the Catholic world, whether of saints or of high feasts like the Annunciation and the Assumption of the Virgin. Because of the variety of the contents and the individual treatment of the stories, it is impossible to

believe the work to be anything but an original compilation from a number of different sources. At the same time, any well-stocked monastic library might easily have furnished the materials for the book. On this score, there is no reason to suppose that more than one man was concerned in translating and arranging the earliest version of the work.

The contents are varied by the inclusion of certain passages that have nothing whatever to do with the saints, but serve to give instruction in a palatable form. Thus the *Life of Kenelm*, the ninth century boy-king and martyr of Mercia, contains an elaborate description of the political divisions of England; and the account of St. Michael's contests with the devil leads the writer into a very long cosmology similar to the works entitled *De Natura Rerum* by Isidore of Seville and Bede. Occasionally, as in the case of *All Saints'* and *All Souls'*, a familiar homiletic strain enters, though the discourse nowhere takes a homiletic form. Two passages from *All Souls' Day* I shall quote in a rather free translation to show the bludgeon-like directness of the work when it touches abuses, and to show also the free and easy movement of the verse at its best. The writer has been saying that penance should be measured according to the sin. He goes on: —

> Therefore should one bethink him,
> And to a foolish priest trust not, or penance wildly laid.
> Forsooth, or here or elsewhere, each sin shall be repaid.
> What? How is then of Janekin and of Robinet the wild,
> Of Annot and of Malekin who wish the priest so mild?

And they say: "This priest is hard. God shield us! Have no fear!
We'll go to seek Sir Gilbert priest. He never is severe,
And he will shrive us easily; our sins shall be forgiven."
By God, when they have done it all, home they go unshriven.

Again, after discussing the question of the celebration of mass by a wicked priest, he says: —

But though the mass be none the worse, by my neck, the priest
That sings it thus in deadly sin shall dearly pay, at least!
For when Sir Gilbert ends the mass, his life will he so dight
To be in taverns all the day and with his quean at night.
He says, when any calls him priest: "Sit still, my comrades, fie!
The priest is hanging in the church; but here, just now, am I."
His surplice or perhaps his cope he calls the priest, you see,
But he shall leave his cope at home, when he goes to hell, parde!

Such terse phrasing is not the rule throughout the *Legendary*, one has to admit; yet I am unable to detect any variation in manner and style sufficient to indicate a difference in authorship, as far, that is to say, as the texts common to the older manuscripts are concerned. Whether one man or several men made the original compilation, the work must have been done in a monastery. The extracts just given show clearly enough the author's lack of sympathy with the secular clergy, while monastic abuses are never scored. The variety of sources that must have been used again points to a conventual library. The method of narration and the style, as far as they have individuality at all, tend to confirm my belief that the legends were translated and collected for the use of monks and of laymen who desired a profitable and equally interesting substitute for the current romances of ad-

venture. Emphasis is laid where one would expect in such circumstances. Thus the story of *St. Thomas Becket*, the militant hero of the English Church, is told with greater fulness of detail than any other, running to nearly two thousand and five hundred verses. It is, moreover, perhaps rather more successful than any of the other lives. Again, the marvellous voyage of *St. Brendan* and the *Purgatory of St. Patrick*, both of which can vie with romances in the elements of popular interest, receive liberal treatment in the matter of space. The sensational adventures attributed to the apostles *John* and *Thomas*, the gruesome history of *St. Clement*, no less than the appealing biographies of *Francis of Assisi* and *Edmund of Canterbury*, are related at great length. Indeed, the treatment of these romantic stories shows considerable skill. Though the style is without dignity or what we call distinction, the movement of events is rapid and seldom clogged or obscure. The use of detail, furthermore, is picturesque, just as it is in the better romances. The dull parts of the *Legendary* are those in which the writer has summarized the lives of saints very briefly.

The likeness to romances is increased by the conversations with which the legends are plentifully strewn: Quite in the accepted manner of romances is the parleying: the swift exchange of rather formal speech, the courteous or excessively discourteous use of epithets of address. The last point is one to be noticed in connection with the authorship of the work: a marked mannerism of style in the legends that are common to the earlier manuscripts

is the use of French phrases of salutation or exclamation. "Beau sire," "beau frère," "dieu merci," and such current coin of language occur over and over again, along with similar English phrases. This does not indicate, to my mind, a French source for the *Legendary*, but merely a tendency on the part of the writer to ape the manner of secular fiction.

The question as to the relationship between the *Legendary* and the chronicle popularly known as Robert of Gloucester's, although a difficult one, as I have already remarked, is of the utmost importance in connection with the baffling problem of the authorship of the legends. The chronicle, it should be said at the outset, seems to have been the work of at least three men. Originally it must have ended with the reign of Henry I, but it was continued by two different men in two different ways to the year 1271. The first of these continuators called himself Robert. Further than the facts that he was an eye-witness of the battle of Evesham in 1265 and was obviously well acquainted with the topography of Gloucestershire, we know nothing whatever about him. He could not have written earlier than 1297, since he referred to Louis IX as having been canonized. The date of the third writer we have no good means of determining, but we may suppose that he lived early in the fourteenth century. Apparently a certain number of interpolations were afterwards made in the earlier part of the chronicle by still another scribe.

Now, as before stated, there are several passages in the

chronicle that correspond, line for line, to similar passages in the *Legendary*. There are only ten saints, let me say, of whom more than cursory mention is made in the chronicle. In the case of eight of them, as far as the texts yet edited permit one to judge, there is more or less parallelism to the accounts in the *Legendary*. Altogether, there are at least thirteen passages of significance to the problem. Three of these, adduced by the editor of Robert of Gloucester, I cannot control further than to say that Mr. Aldis Wright seems to have used the late manuscript of the *Legendary* in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, in working out his sources, though he does not name it. There he would have found lives of *Athelwold* and *Alphege*, as well as perhaps a longer text of *Dunstan* than those yet printed. From all three of these he cites parallels. Though I have been unable to consult the Trinity MS., the fact that it is late tends rather to confirm than to contradict the inferences that I have drawn from the other ten passages. It would be out of place for me here to present the evidence in detail. Briefly stated, the situation is this: the description of Britain in the life of *St. Kenelm;* two lines in the life of *St. Wulstan* about events during the Norman Conquest; a couplet in the life of *St. Swithin*, giving the date of his translation; and lines giving the date of St. Dunstan's birth and an account of his recall to power by King Edgar appear to have been taken bodily from the earlier version of the chronicle. On the other hand, it is impossible to believe that the chronicler did not make use of the *Legendary* in his ac-

counts of St. Thomas of Canterbury and of St. Kenelm's death. The reason for this apparent contradiction becomes clear, however, when we notice that the two latter passages are found in the portions of the chronicle written by the continuators. From the parallels between the life of *St. Edward Martyr* and the account of him in the chronicle I can draw no conclusion save that they may have a common source. Each omits many verses found in the other, though they have fifty-two lines in common.

If my interpretation of the evidence be correct, we have this state of affairs: the chronicle was first written, down through the reign of Henry I; certain passages from it were then used by the compiler of the *Legendary;* and later at least two lives from the latter work were pillaged by continuators of the chronicle. Furthermore, since we know that the second chronicler, who called himself Robert, wrote about the year 1300, we can date the earliest form of the *Legendary* more accurately than it has been possible to do up to the present. Dr. Horstmann's guess, often repeated by other scholars, that it was composed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century may be accepted, with the caution, merely, that we cannot yet be sure of the terminus *a quo.* I regret that I am unable to find any clear evidence as to whether one man or several were concerned in compiling the *Legendary* as it stood at first; and I do not feel prepared even to express an opinion as to whether the chronicler and any legend-writer were one.

The compiling of the *Legendary* did not, as a matter of

fact, end its history. No one of the many manuscripts to which I have referred agrees altogether in content with any other. The freedom with which scribes inserted legends, only taking care, usually, that they should be written in what might pass for the same metre, is a testimony to the extreme popularity of the collection. Who translated these lives we do not know, and we have no means of knowing. Sometimes, as in the case of *Mary Magdalene* in the oldest extant manuscript and of the *Assumption of the Virgin* in one of the youngest manuscripts, we find that an older poem has been incorporated into the series. The *Assumption*, indeed, was given a new form to make it fit into the collection. In other instances, legends in other than the prevailing metre have been interpolated or appended without any attempt to change their form. Again, eleven of the manuscripts contain only fragments of the work, which have been taken out of their setting and copied into manuscripts with other legends or with poems of quite a different character. Some of the later manuscripts, moreover, as well as the earliest of all, do not give the legends in calendar order, but present them quite without system. Altogether, no more tangled skein of relationship was ever accomplished by the tampering of scribes, even when they had to do with a work of edification. The obvious conclusions to be drawn from this are that the scribes had no sense of literary property and that they enjoyed the contents of the book. It would seem that everyone who had a new copy of it made must have had it arranged according to his own predilections. If one

is tempted to say that the worth of the compilation as literature is measured by the ease with which new legends were inserted among the old, let it be remembered that the additions are, generally speaking, less vigorous than those lives which we must regard as forming part of the original collection. It was easy enough to write a legend that followed the general metrical scheme. Great literary merit the work does not possess, in its best estate, but it is less contemptible, both in form and substance, than much of the ephemeral writing that the boasted enlightenment of our own day finds tolerable. The continuous popularity of the book is attested by its growth down into the fifteenth century: as long, that is, as the language of it could be read without difficulty.

One aspect of the work must be mentioned in conclusion. All, or nearly all, the manuscripts have sections devoted to the movable and immovable feasts of the Church year. These vary, however, both in number, length, and position. Sometimes the story of Advent is found expanded until it includes not only a *Life of Our Lady* and the *Processus Prophetarum* but the whole Old Testament history; sometimes the *Passion* is appended to a *Life of Christ*. In some of the manuscripts the appropriate readings for the high festivals are given their place according to the calendar, but in the majority they precede the lives of saints, forming a more or less complete *temporale* which corresponds to the *sanctorale*. In one manuscript they stand thus as a separate section of the work, and in another they are found by themselves, without the

legends. Whether or not a *temporale* formed part of the original plan for the book cannot be determined until these poems have been printed in their entirety and subjected to close study. My impression is that they were gradually added by one and another writer and that they were placed in a section by themselves only when they grew to the size of a separate book. The fact that the manuscript which contains the *temporale* by itself is the only one with a complete set of the poems seems to point in that direction.

Of a less complicated development in some respects than the great compilation just discussed, but with no fewer difficulties in others, is the *North-English Homily Collection*. Though it survives in fewer manuscripts than the southern series, it must have been, we must believe from the intricacies of their relationship, scarcely less popular. Evidence of this popularity is afforded by the fact that one of the extant manuscripts was written in the South by a scribe who turned the whole book into the speech of that region. Three distinct recensions of the work have been traced; and the later ones differ so much from the original that they may almost be regarded as independent books. Originally, as is shown by the name which I have applied to it, it was not intended to be a collection of saints' lives at all, but a work of edification "of cristes dedes and his sau." The Latin title in one of the best manuscripts, which may be translated *Sunday Gospels for the Whole Year expounded in the Vulgar Tongue,* is excellently descriptive, if cumbersome. The

author's intention, as he himself states it in his prologue, is plain: —

> Forthi tha godspells that always
> Er red in kirc on sundays,
> Opon inglis wil ic undo.

To this end he adopted the method of treatment that had become by the thirteenth century the stereotyped form for sermonizing, very largely through the influence of the preaching Friars. He made a free paraphrase of the stated passage from the Gospels; he gave an exposition of its meaning according to the analogical fashion of the day; and he told a story by way of illustration, sometimes a very elaborate story. All this he cast in jogging couplets with four beats to the line, like the verses just quoted.

He wrote explicitly for the unlearned, though not exclusively for them. In the prologue he said: "For unlearned men have more need to hear God's word than clerks who look in their Mirror and see in books how they shall live. And both the clerk and the unlearned man, born in England and long dwelling therein, can understand English; but all men cannot, certainly, understand Latin and French." No more than the *South-English Legendary* was the work intended, unless I misunderstand the prologue, to be read in church, Sunday by Sunday. "For namely on the Sunday come unlearned men to the church to say their prayers and to learn spiritual knowledge, which they hear there. For as great need have they to understand what the Gospel means as have learned men. . . . There-

fore I will show in English and make our unlearned brother know what all the Gospels say that fall to the Sundays." The writer meant, I think, to supplement and not to supersede ordinary sermons by his versified homilies. As is the case with the southern legends, the length of some of the discourses (several of them run to more than a thousand lines) makes it impossible for me to believe that they were intended for reading at mass.

The varying length of the homilies was largely due to the tendency of the narrative to overbalance the other parts of the discourse. It would seem that the maker not only regarded the stories as likely to interest his audience, but himself came to feel a disproportionate interest in them. He drew upon the Bible for some of his tales, and at least seven he took from the *Vitæ Patrum;* others he found in some collection of Mary legends; but in nine cases he recounted either complete lives of saints or incidents from such lives. The collection thus gathered was a miscellaneous assortment of stories, some of them only vaguely illustrative of the texts for the Sundays in question, yet it gave the reader a very representative selection of mediæval narrative. The subjects and the qualities are all there, though turned to the uses of practical piety: adventures, laughable incidents, quests for the unattainable. If some of the stories, to the modern reader, seem ill calculated to serve the end in view, it must be remembered that they were chosen for other palates than his, and for other ways of thinking. The author selected what would captivate his audience, whether by

way of conveying somewhat crudely the notion of spiritual aspiration or by depicting right and wrong. Like Ælfric before him, he found narrative more likely to serve his purpose than exposition pure and simple.

He had a model for his work. In the preceding chapter I have referred to the *Miroir* or *Evangiles des Domees* by Robert de Gretham, which was written about the middle of the thirteenth century. Not only do the titles and general plans of the two books correspond, but there are various passages throughout that are markedly similar. Perhaps it would be unwise to argue from the reference in the prologue of the English work to "clerks who look in their Mirror and see in books how they shall live" that the writer knew this particular *Miroir*. "Speculum" was not an uncommon mediæval title. Taken in connection with other evidence, however, the reference may not be without value. The evidence from similarity of plan and from what seems to be adaptation of individual passages I have space to summarize only briefly. Both collections began with the first Sunday in Advent and ran through the twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity. Although there is considerable variation among the manuscripts of the two works as to the order of the homilies and as to the texts for particular Sundays, they have a common peculiarity in the gospel they assign to the fifth Sunday after Epiphany, which accords with the uses neither of Sarum nor of York. Furthermore, a dozen homilies in each collection are developed in the same way, either as a whole or in part. As far as they run parallel,

the one set might well be a paraphrase of the other. In at least five cases the correspondences are so close, idea by idea and line by line, that it is impossible for me to believe that the English author did not have the French text before him while he wrote. There is even, occasionally, a verbal resemblance that is striking. Though it will be difficult, until all the manuscripts of both works have been edited and can be submitted to a minute comparison, to decide just how far the dependence of the English work on Robert de Gretham goes, my own investigation of the texts makes me ready to assert that the *Miroir* had been read, at least, by the compiler of the English homilies. So much seems to me assured by the evidence at command. With regard to the stories, which have a far greater importance in the English than in the French work, the former seems to have cut loose from the latter and to have taken entirely different material. I consider, it will be seen, Robert de Gretham's *Miroir* as being a model rather than a source for the northern collection of homilies: a model followed or departed from at the discretion of the compiler.

The preceding discussion naturally leads one to inquire when, where, and by whom the original recension of the *North-English Homily Collection* was made. Answers to these questions can be given with a varying degree of probability, though none can be answered with absolute certainty. About the authorship, as a matter of fact, we really possess no clue that can be trusted. The scribes of two or three manuscripts have indicated their names

(Johannes Smyth, for example!); but they have been less careful to preserve the name of the compiler. It is, however, an interesting coincidence, at least, that at the end of the collection in one manuscript (Cambridge Univ. Library Dd. I. 1) appears "quod R. Staundone," while in another (Phillipps 8122) is written "nomen scriptoris R.S." Since the two manuscripts are something like fifty years apart in date and in different dialects, they could not have been the work of a single scribe. One is tempted, therefore, to regard some R. Staundone as the original maker of the collection, though the evidence is very far from satisfactory. Neither Robert Mannyng of Brunne nor Richard Rolle of Hampole, to whom the work has at one time or another been ascribed, can possibly have been the writer. It is safest to say that for the present the book must be classed among the anonymous productions of the age. That the author was a cleric is most probable, but there can be no certainty whether he was a monk or a secular priest.

With regard to the part of England where the collection was made, there is more evidence. Dr. Horstmann called attention to divergences in the gospels, assigned to various Sundays, from the uses of Rome and of Sarum. He therefore assumed that the homilies were composed in the diocese of Durham. If it be added that the ordering of the Sunday texts differs from the use of York, we may with propriety concur in this opinion. The variation is found in the case of four different Sundays, though it should be said that the arrangement of the manuscripts

seems to indicate a certain amount of confusion in the minds of the scribes. All the manuscripts containing the original collection, save one, are, as a matter of fact, in the dialect of the North, which confirms the evidence from arrangement. To be sure, we have no manuscript that does not show corruption through the independence and carelessness of copyists; but we can be certain from the rhymes that the work was composed not very far to the south of the Scottish border. At what particular place it was made we have no means of knowing. The compiler must have had access to a monastic library of some size, for he eked out the "poverty" of mind, which he mentions in the prologue, by the use of a good many books as sources of his tales; but he might have found them in any one of several establishments in the North.

As to when he wrote, I am inclined to believe that the date customarily assigned is somewhat too early. It has been argued from the supposed date of the earliest and best manuscript, which is unfortunately only a fragment, that the collection must have been made originally at the end of the thirteenth century. This manuscript (Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, Ch. 5. 21) has been antedated to the early fourteenth century, whereas a comparison of its hand with that of manuscripts, the dates of which are known with certainty, shows that it could not have been written till late in that century. Though we ought to allow for the lapse of a considerable period to account for the changes that had clearly been made in the text, even of this early manuscript, there is no

reason to suppose on this score that the work was compiled until the early part of the fourteenth century. Moreover, the language of the author, as far as it can be determined from an examination of the rhymes, does not make it necessary for us to place him as early as the thirteenth century, though it scarcely warrants a dogmatic statement that he wrote in the fourteenth. Another criterion for the date is furnished by the fact that some seven stories seem to have been taken by the compiler from William de Wadington's *Manuel des Pechiez*, a work of edification composed in England during the latter half of the thirteenth century. A translation of this by Robert Mannyng of Brunne, entitled *Handlyng Synne*, was undertaken, as we know from Robert's explicit statement, in the year 1303. A comparison of certain tales, which appear in all three works, makes it clear that our author borrowed from William rather than from Robert, and it seems probable that the French work would have been drawn upon for our homilies at about the same time it was made the basis of a free translation. Robert and our author, according to their own words, wrote for a similar public and with the same purpose: they were moved, though in different sections of England, by the same impulse. All in all, it is safe to regard the *North-English Homily Collection* as a product of the earlier fourteenth century.

I have spoken of the author's tendency to expand the narrative parts of these homilies out of all proportion to the expository sections. That readers were likewise more

interested in the legends and *exempla* than in the sermonizing proper is shown by one manuscript (Harleian 2391), which contains the tales of the original collection without the gospel paraphrases and the expositions. Along this line, moreover, was formed one of the two later recensions of the work, which not only included lives of saints but transformed the book into a true legendary. The extant manuscripts of the original compilation show that the change was inevitable: some of the best of them have sermons for St. John the Baptist's Day and for the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. From this to the addition of a *proprium sanctorum* or a legendary in the same metre was but a step; and the addition was twice attempted during the fourteenth century, once by a southern and once by a northern writer, though there seems to be no way to discover just when or where these redactors did their work.

One of the recensions thus made is found in the famous Vernon MS., owned by the Bodleian Library, which contains also an important text of the *South-English Legendary*, a metrical translation of seven lives from the *Legenda Aurea*, and a series of Mary legends. A copy of this enlarged redaction is extant in a manuscript in the British Museum; but it has not been discovered elsewhere. We cannot attribute the changes and additions of the new version to the scribe of the Vernon MS., because he copied the *South-English Legendary* also in an enlarged form. Before this scribe made his great thesaurus of legends towards the end of the fourteenth century, there-

fore, some southerner had transformed the *North-English Homily Collection* not merely by turning it into another dialect but by adding a large number of homilies for week days and saints' days throughout the year, and by arranging the whole in two parts. In the first he included nearly all the legends and *contes dévots* of the original collection, and also put in several new stories, notably for the feast of Corpus Christi. The second part he made a *proprium sanctorum* with homilies appropriate to the celebration of thirty-four different days. The saints for whose days he wrote sermons in this part were all well-known figures to the Church at large; and no legends in the strict sense of the word are included. Perhaps, as Dr. Horstmann has suggested, the copyist of the Vernon MS. considered it unnecessary to give the lives of the saints in question, since he had already transcribed those of the *South-English Legendary*. He may, accordingly, have had before him a version of the work that was far more truly a legendary than the one transmitted by him to us. I may add that the introduction to the second part is in strophic form and was probably engrafted here because it fulfilled the purposes of the redactor.

The other new recension was likewise made in the fourteenth century, but in the North rather than the South. Although it is preserved in two manuscripts only, the complication of their mutual relationship seems to indicate a wider popularity for this particular enlargement of the collection than would be implied by its meagre representation in modern libraries. The scribe

of one of the manuscripts, for example, rearranged the first twenty-four homilies of the series according to the historical sequence of their scriptural texts. The other manuscript was written by two different copyists, the second of whom must have followed a text strikingly like that used by the scribe of the first manuscript. As in the southern redaction, the work is much enlarged and is divided into two parts. First comes a *temporale* modelled on the original collection but much altered in form and in substance. Not only are homilies added for even more week days than is the case with the Vernon recension, but new homilies are sometimes substituted outright for the old. In general, the writer had a tendency to stress the gospel paraphrases and to restrict the explanatory and homiletic passages; and he omitted more than half of the narratives originally contained in the work. Thus he made the new *temporale* something like a collection of gospel stories. Curiously enough, considering the nature of the second part of the newly arranged work, one of the manuscripts has interpolated among the homilies for Sundays four lives of saints, three of which (*Stephen the Proto-martyr*, *John the Evangelist*, and *Thomas of Canterbury*) do not appear in the other manuscript. The second part is, indeed, a legendary in the proper sense of the word. It contains, in its completer form, twenty-eight poems appropriate to feast-days of the Church, though a few of these are rather explanations of festivals than stories of saints. Very incomplete the new legendary is as compared with the one from Gloucestershire. It

contains no lives of native saints, and never strays out of the beaten track of the most commonplace hagiography. It could have served no purpose beyond giving its readers a chance to peruse, at various seasons of the year, legends suitable to the greater feasts; it remained an appendage of the *temporale*, just as in the southern collection the *temporale* was always an appendage of the legendary. Such as they were, without much distinction either in substance or in style, the legends seem to have been the work of at least two writers, whose dialects were not precisely the same.

With regard to the *North-English Homily Collection* in its three recensions and its multifarious variations of detail, it must be said that many questions of origin and development still remain unsolved. Such great liberties were taken with its arrangement and its contents that almost every manuscript may be regarded as a new redaction. Were there a steady growth from the beginning to the end of its history, there would be less difficulty in disentangling the stages by which it developed; but the exclusions of the various manuscripts are as mysterious as the inclusions. Scribes seem to have put into it whatever was convenient and to have left out whatever they wished. They sometimes inserted, for example, a northern *Passion of Our Lord*, which was obviously an independent poem at first. They had no consistent plan. As far as any tendency is discoverable in the entire development, it is to transform a collection of sermons into a collection of stories. But the various

authors, translators, and copyists, whose combined work made up the amorphous whole, had as slight regard for systematic construction as they had for literary fame. They were merely desirous, as far as one can see, of giving the unlettered some of the privileges of the learned, and some of the incidental delights.

The author of the original compilation had more sense of narrative values, it seems to me, as well as more vigor of expression, than any of his continuators. He had fluency; he knew how to concentrate attention on the points of a story that would most interest his readers; he possessed a gift for thrusting home a moral with a homely phrase. He could give a satiric picture of actual conditions in a few words, and he used unconventional language with good effect in trying to make his readers understand and feel what he had at heart. The legends that he retold have neither loftiness of thought nor beauty of expression, but they represent the reaction of common minds upon ecclesiastical traditions beloved alike by high and low, the ignorant and the learned. In this way they have their value for the history both of legends and of literature at large.

About the year 1400, or perhaps slightly earlier, a third important legendary in verse was produced, to match those originating in Gloucestershire and Durham. This was made north of the Forth, and is known to modern scholars as the *Scottish Legend Collection*. The compiler did not give his name, though he wrote with some freedom about his personal history. He was, he

said in his preface, a "mynistere of haly kirke" who could no longer do his work on account of great age and feebleness. In several other passages he spoke similarly of his condition. At the beginning of the legend of *St. Julian*, for example, he told of his frequent travels as a young man to get wisdom, and how on these journeys the travellers were accustomed to say a *pater noster* to the patron of the road whenever they came in sight of an inn. Altogether, he stamped his work with the impression of simple-minded piety and of sufficient though not extraordinary learning. He was not without experience in writing when he began his legendary, since he had already translated, in his old age, "some part" of the story of Christ and the Virgin. From his cursory sketch of this book, which is not known to survive, it appears that he had in reality written a complete account of Jesus and His Mother, beginning with the birth of the Virgin, ending with the Assumption, and including all the events of the Incarnation and the Passion. To this he had appended a series of sixty-six miracles, the largest collection of Mary legends, as far as we know, that ever existed in English. From what original he translated we cannot tell, but only that he had made the completest *temporale* of the sort found in the *South-English Legendary* of which we have any record in English. All this he had accomplished, in his own phrase, "to eschew idleness."

After making the work just mentioned, which must have been of very considerable length, the author wished to write, if not prevented by "eld and fault of sight," of

the twelve apostles. That done, he was apparently led to make the legendary as a whole, which contains more than 33,000 lines in short rhyming couplets. At least, though the more recent editor of the collection has expressed doubts as to whether it was completed by the old man who wrote of the twelve apostles, there is nothing in language or style to indicate diversity of authorship. The feat of making a paraphrase of such length in simple metre is not, it must be remarked, too extraordinary for belief, even though the writer was enfeebled by age. Industry and application, together with a certain facility of expression in verse, were the sole requisites. The differences in literary value of the individual legends were due, pretty clearly, to the materials with which the author worked. Though his statement that he was merely a translator was too modest, since he paraphrased always and frequently adapted, he cannot be credited with poetical creation.

He was formerly identified with John Barbour, the Scottish contemporary of Chaucer, who died as Archdeacon of Aberdeen and wrote the *Bruce*, a vigorous national epic, and has had ascribed to him also a long poem on the Trojan War. It has been shown, however, that the legend-writer could not have been Barbour: differences of dialect as well as of verse make it impossible, while the evidence for the identification was never well founded. We must be content, it appears, to let him remain anonymous and to be grateful for such indications as to his personality as he gave us. For myself,

though I have said that the legendary as a whole was apparently the work of a single hand, I do not feel sure that some of the lives may not have been added by a near contemporary and neighbor of the original author. The fact that we possess only a single manuscript of the book, and clearly not the original manuscript, increases the difficulty of deciding the matter. The question remains open because it has to be decided, if at all, by means of literary criticism, which is very far from an infallible guide as to authorship. My personal impression, based on the style of the stories and the prevailing tendency to begin each of them with a longer or shorter introduction in a subjective manner, is that the legendary was completed in virtually its present form by one man. As I have said, I believe that the varying interest of the legends and the apparently unequal narrative skill displayed by the writer, were due to the sources. Certainly they are not sufficient to be the foundation of any argument for diversity of authorship.

The order in which the legends are arranged is of considerable interest, since it differs markedly from that of the two collections previously considered. Whether or no the writer at first intended to do more than make a history of the apostles as an appendix to his series of poems on Christ and the Virgin, the completed series of lives shows a plan that might well have been in the compiler's mind from the start. Like the collections of lives in French prose that were circulated in England, it has the hierarchical order. To the legends of the twelve apostles

succeed those of *Mark* and *Luke* as representatives of the evangelists. Lives of *Mary Magdalene* and *Martha*, with emphasis on their supposed apostolate in France, then follow; and *Mary Magdalene* seemingly suggested *Mary of Egypt*, whose romantic story comes next. Thereafter four martyrs of the early church are celebrated, and as many more confessors. From this point the order becomes confused, though it is apparent in several cases that similarities between the characteristics or careers of saints account for their juxtaposition. Towards the end a plan can once more be discerned in two groups, one of four martyrs and one of ten virgins, with the latter of which the series of fifty legends closes. Though it is not to be supposed, as we shall see, that the maker of the legendary used any one of the collections in French prose as a source, it seems likely that he was influenced by them in his choice of a plan for the book. Even though all the contents are not arranged in orderly fashion according to the "degrees" of sainthood, they are not put in quite at haphazard.

A theory of Dr. Horstmann's, who first edited the collection, that the writer originally ended the series with the legend of *Barnabas*, made a new ending with *St. Machor* (number 27), stopped again with *St. Ninian* (number 40), and finally added the sequence of the ten virgins, has the color of probability. Certainly the position of the legends of *St. Machor* and *St. Ninian* makes one believe that they were respectively intended to stand last in the collection. Not only are these the only British

saints in the entire list, but two considerable passages in their lives are identical. It would seem that the maker of the book not only had fears of being unable, on account of his age, to complete his work, but was economical of materials that could be made to serve a double purpose. Though we cannot be sure that the one manuscript extant preserves the original order of the legends in every particular, the fact of its having just fifty lives seems to indicate that it contains the entire series. Furthermore, the round number tends to persuade one that the work was planned and executed by a single writer.

The collection was not a compilation from various sources to the same extent as the two earlier English legend books. Such close parallels have been noted between a large majority of the lives and the most famous mediæval repository of legends and exempla, the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine, that this must be regarded as the primary source. In introducing the legend of *St. Blasius*, indeed, the writer expressly acknowledged his indebtedness. "I found about him in the *Golden Legend*, both the beginning and the end, as I shall here undo for you, without any addition set thereto." Elsewhere he did not refer to the work by name, though he had the quite customary habit of mentioning a "book" as the source of his information. As to what books he used, aside from the *Legenda Aurea*, I cannot speak with much confidence, since the subject has not yet been properly investigated. Indirectly at least, he drew upon the *Vitæ Patrum;* but since he sometimes referred to

this when he was clearly depending on the *Legenda Aurea*, his references have little value. Dr. Horstmann suggested that the *Speculum Historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais, which formed part of the great encyclopædia of the later Middle Ages, furnished the author with much of his information. This, however, cannot be regarded as proved. For the two Scottish saints whose legends were given, the sources were clearly independent Latin lives: that of *St. Ninian* probably being the biography by Ailred of Rievaulx. Although I feel some doubt as to whether the author used quite as much liberty in handling his materials, by way of interpolating and combining, as Dr. Horstmann would have us believe, it is evident that he often inserted general observations of his own aside from those that he put into the introductions and conclusions of the various legends. Everywhere he paraphrased, as I have said, rather than translated.

The work has been called a production of more literary value than the two earlier Middle English legendaries, but not with much justice. Greater sophistication it does have, which gives it a specious air of distinction. There are more frequent references to the Church Fathers; there is a closer approximation to the manner of Latin legends. Without making any parade of learning, for he was evidently a simple-hearted and modest person, the author conveyed the impression of scholarly tastes and of seclusion. He had his mind fixed, I should say, less on the public for which he was writing and more

on the legends themselves than the makers of the English collections. Though he must have written for a similar unlearned public, he impresses the modern reader with the truthfulness of his statement that he did his work in order to avoid idleness. There is comparatively little homiletic application and almost no effort to write down to the level of the laity. The author seems to have been one of those quiet and industrious priests of scholarly tendency who have dignified the ranks of the parish clergy in all times, men who have been neither self-seeking nor always effective, but useful none the less.

In spite of the limited praise that can be given the legendary for its literary qualities, there would be no point in denying that many of the lives are narrated with very considerable skill. Even granting, as I think we must, that the better stories were paraphrased from originals less bald and stereotyped than the sources of the poorer legends, it is still true that a writer devoid of literary ability might have spoiled the admirable accounts of *Mary of Egypt* and *Eugenia*. Not only do such legends as these show the power of phrasing incident effectively, but they display a genuine feeling that elevates the verse at times to the level of imaginative poetry. Though the author had no greater skill in telling a story than the earlier writers whom I have mentioned, and did not possess the gift of some of them for pungent satire, he alone perhaps could have penned the lyrical address to the Virgin incorporated in the *Mary of Egypt*. These fifty-four lines, with some other passages of sim-

ilar quality, relieve the work from barrenness and give it occasional touches of romantic charm.

Not long after the compilation of the work just described, John Mirk, a member of the Augustinian canonry of Lilleshul in Shropshire, made a collection of homilies in prose, which he called the *Festial*. We know nothing about him except that he wrote also a treatise in verse, the character of which is explained by its title, *Instructions for Parish Priests*. The date of his *Festial* is assured by the fact that at least one of the manuscripts states with reference to St. Wenefred that her day "is not ordeynyd by holy churche to be halowid," whereas another and later manuscript remarks: "which day is now ordeynet to be halowet." As the day was thus dignified in 1415, it is obvious that the book must have been written before that year.

The title indicates the general scope of the work, which contains brief sermons for most of the chief festivals of Christ and the Virgin, and also for many of the celebrations in honor of the saints. The homilies are arranged in the order of the calendar, beginning with the first Sunday in Advent, just as is the case with the *North-English Homily Collection*. They are not based, however, on the gospels appointed for particular days, and they contain little exhortation or biblical paraphrase. For the most part they explain why such and such a day was honored and how or when the celebration was appointed; beyond that they are devoted to the narration of stories. The homilies for saints' days usually contain very little save

accounts of the saints, together with one or more miracles. Sometimes they have summaries of acts and passions, sometimes stories of translations, sometimes detached incidents illustrative of the saints' careers. They are never very long. Otherwise, especially for the regular festivals of the liturgical year, they give *exempla*, sometimes drawn from the lives of the saints and sometimes not. Altogether, the *Festial* includes one of the largest collections of anecdotes, Mary legends, *contes dévots*, and legendary stories of all sorts that was ever made in English. The work embraces in its complete form about seventy-five homilies or legends, but the total number of narratives is far greater than this, as several stories are often given for the same day.

Only three English saints are included in the list of those whose days are honored. It is significant of the place accorded St. Thomas of Canterbury as late as the fifteenth century that Mirk gave narratives not only for his day but also for the date of his translation. The other two native saints were evidently put in for local reasons. St. Alkmund, a ninth century Northumbrian king, was patron of Mirk's own church, and as such naturally honored by the author, while the centre of the cult of St. Wenefred was Holywell, not far over the border into Wales from Lilleshul. Various other British saints are mentioned by way of anecdotal reference, of course, and many tales of wonder from English sources are introduced. None the less, it is as true of the *Festial* as of the Scottish legendary in verse that the saints celebrated are

almost all saints of the early Church who were in no way connected with the west of Europe. It would be unfair to draw any deduction from this as to the native cults of England, save that in the ordinary parish church only the greater saints, together with some few of local fame, were specifically honored.

This deduction as to parish churches can be made with safety because John Mirk, as his prologue definitely says, made the *Festial* to give priests the information they needed for the instruction of the people about the great feasts of the year. He had felt from his own lack of learning the difficulty experienced by parish priests, through want of books and "simpleness of letters," in teaching their flocks. Accordingly he drew from the *Legenda Aurea* "with more adding to" what was needful for the parson "to teach and for others to learn" with reference to the high festivals of the year. As a matter of fact, though his chief source was the *Legenda Aurea*, he put in a good deal of information from other books and arranged the whole according to his own liking. Frequently he mentioned the *Gesta Romanorum* as the book on which he was drawing; and famous names like Gregory, Bernard, John Beleth (who wrote in the twelfth century a *Summa de Divinis Officiis*), and Alexander Neckam were used to give authority to statements or to stories. One must remember, of course, that to John Mirk, as to most mediæval writers, an authority quoted at second hand was as good as any other, and that many of his references were taken from Jacobus de Voragine.

Yet he paraphrased very freely and, like Sir Thomas Malory, "reduced" stories to convenient compass. He was not a translator but a compiler.

The *Festial* has no literary graces and makes no literary pretensions. It is an interesting work, not because Mirk told stories well but because he told so many stories. As a compendium of legend and anecdote it makes exceedingly good reading at the present day for anyone who likes the bare essentials of plot and has sufficient imagination to envisage detail for himself. It must have been exceedingly useful, as well as interesting, to the parish priest who wished to piece out his imperfections of learning and of illustration by means of a single book. Quite evidently it was found serviceable, for at least fourteen more or less complete manuscripts of the work are known to exist, while eighteen editions of it were printed between 1483 and 1532. The manuscripts contain a varying number of homilies, which shows that the book was subjected to the customary scribal tampering. Additions were made, as well as necessary transcriptions into other than the Shropshire dialect of the author.

The most marked change made, however, was one of order. One manuscript (Harleian 2391), which contains also the narratives of the *North-English Homily Collection*, rearranges the homilies in two divisions, a *temporale* and a *sanctorale*. This was the order followed by Caxton, who printed the first edition, as well as by subsequent editors. It is interesting to note that the work was three

times printed in France before the end of the fifteenth century, once at Paris and twice at Rouen. The other editions were all from London and Westminster, save that the second was printed at Oxford in 1486. For more than a century Mirk's *Festial* thus enjoyed a popularity that it merited by its convenience as a work of reference, though not by its worth as literature. Like many another book of greater pretensions and of more solid value, it was overwhelmed by the Protestant Reformation, which did its best to bury the Middle Ages more completely than the ancient world had ever been buried. From this point of view the reformers were the new barbarians.

Of a different character from the collections hitherto described, and addressed to a different class of readers, was a series of thirteen lives of women saints by an Austin friar named Osbern Bokenam. The author was, according to his own admission, a follower of Lydgate and Capgrave; and he may properly be regarded as being of the Chaucerian school, which thus had an influence on the movement that I have been tracing. Though a somewhat crabbed poet, Osbern was a poet still. Of an invincible personal modesty, and convinced that the great poetical harvest had already been reaped by his predecessors, he yet regarded himself, quite clearly, as being in the tradition of the muses. His own words from his prologue to the life of *St. Agnes*, or rather the words addressed to him by Pallas, are worth quoting to show the spirit in which he undertook his task.

> Thou commyst to late, for gadyrd up be
> The most fresh flourys by personys thre —
> Of wych tweyne han fynysshyd here fate,
> But the thrydde hath Atropos yet in cherte —
> As Gower, Chauncer, and Joon Lytgate.

It will be seen that Chaucer's influence had affected the legend-maker's point of view and, not altogether happily, his style.

Nothing is more significant of this changed attitude, which under happier political conditions might have made English literature flower in the fifteenth century as it did a hundred years later, than the fact that Osbern Bokenam gave us abundant information about his own life. He was obscure even in his own day; he was learned rather than gifted; he was conscious of his own unimportance; yet he found it natural to show who he was and why he wrote. He was able, besides, to make legends in a pious spirit and yet to refer as frequently to Plato and Ovid as to Augustine and Jerome. He was personal, just as he was classical, because he expressed the temper of his age.

Osbern Bokenam was born about 1393 and during the period of his literary activity, at least, was a member of the Augustinian house at Stokclare in Suffolk. He had, as we shall see, learned and noble friends; and he himself was a scholar. He travelled also. We learn that in 1438 he was in Venice and that in 1445, before beginning his legend of *Mary Magdalene*, he went on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostella in Spain. Moreover,

he speaks in the prologue to *Margaret* of the last time he was in Italy, quite with the casual ease of the maker of many journeys. He wrote four different books, certainly, while there is some reason for supposing that a *Dialogue betwix a Seculer and Frere* was from his pen. Of the works known to be his, a collection of legends, presumably in prose, came first. No copy of this has been found, however; and our information about it comes solely through Osbern's description at the beginning of his second work, the *Mappula Angliæ*. He speaks there of "the englische boke," which he has "compiled of *Legenda Aurea* and of other famous legendes at the instaunce of my specialle frendis and for edificacioun and comfort of alle tho the whiche shuld redene hit or here hit," and mentions lives "of *Seynt Cedde, Seynt Felix, Seynt Edwarde, Seynt Oswalde*, and many other seyntis of Englond." This collection could not have been the extant translation of the *Legenda Aurea*, for that does not contain lives of the English saints whom he cites. One can only hope that some manuscript of what must have been a highly interesting series of legends may yet be discovered. The *Mappula Angliæ* is a description of England translated from Higden's *Polychronicon*, and can be dated as having been written before 1445, since a treatise on reckoning time, which follows it in the only surviving manuscript, was copied by the same scribe in that year. In the *Mappula Angliæ* the author twice gives his name. In the epilogue he says that the capital letters at the beginning of the chapters "expressyn the compilatours name"; and

they spell, in point of fact, "Osbernus Bokenham." In a Latin distich at the end, moreover, his Christian name appears. At some time before he began his extant collection of legends, he made, so he tells us, a Latin poem in *ballade* rhyme concerning the daughters of St. Anne. Of this no trace has been discovered. Last of all he wrote his series of lives of women saints.

This is preserved in a single manuscript, written at Cambridge in 1447 for Thomas Burgh, an Austin friar to whom Osbern had dedicated the first of the legends. The table of contents at the end of the manuscript gives this information, together with the author's name and the facts that he was a doctor of divinity, that he resided at Stokclare, and that the expense of copying the book was thirty shillings. The saints' legends included in the collection were the following: *Margaret*, *Anna*, *Christina*, *Ursula*, *Faith*, *Agnes*, *Dorothy*, *Mary Magdalene*, *Catharine of Alexandria*, *Cecilia*, *Agatha*, *Lucy*, and *Elizabeth*. Osbern began the first of them on September 7, 1443, as he stated with particularity. By 1445 he had written seven others, while the remaining five must have been completed soon after, since the manuscript containing them was copied, as I have said, in 1447. Such exactitude of information is unusual, even about a modern book; and it is interesting to know, further, that Osbern wrote his legend of *Catharine* in five days. Seven of the lives he dedicated to friends or patrons: a fact that throws light not only on his connections but on the conditions of poetical production in the fifteenth century. Aside from the *Margaret*,

to which I have already referred, he inscribed three legends to ladies who bore the names, respectively, of Catharine, Agatha, and Elizabeth, while the *Mary Magdalene* he wrote at the request of Lady Bowsere, Comtesse d'Eu, a sister of Richard of York. The patronage of the *Elizabeth* was only less aristocratic, as a matter of fact, than this last, for it was presented to Elizabeth Vere, Countess of Oxford. With reference to two of the six lives that were not dedicated, Osbern explained his choice of subjects: he wrote about Faith because he was born on her day, and about Cecilia because "long ago" he had taken her together with St. Faith and St. Barbara "to his valentines."

He used various metres for the legends: the four-beat rhyming couplet, and stanzaic forms of seven, eight, and sixteen lines. His favorite, however, seems to have been the rhyme royal, a metre loved by Chaucer and eminently suitable for narratives in verse. For his materials he drew, like John Mirk, on the *Legenda Aurea*, —

> not wurde for wurde, for that ne may be,
> In no translacyoun, after Jeromys decre,
> But fro sentence to sentence I dar wele seyn,
> I hym have folwyde evene by and by.

Though he had a different text of the *Legenda Aurea* from the one which has been printed by the modern editor of that work, and apparently used other books for a few of the lives, the truth of his statement has been shown by recent study of the sources. He gave, in general, as faith-

ful a rendering of his originals as was consistent with his purpose, which was not only devotional but literary.

As a poet and story-teller, Osbern is an interesting figure, though he had no great talent. He was a learned and simple-minded man who dearly loved to intersperse his tales with references to the Muses; with subtleties like his references in the prologue of *Margaret* to the cause efficient, the cause material, the cause formal, and the cause final; with disquisitions on medicine such as the one in which he gravely discussed the nature of the flux that afflicted St. Lucy's mother; or with recollections of his travels. He expressly and with iteration disclaimed all desire to compete as a poet with great men, dead or living; his wish was only to write plainly in "Suthfolk speche." In this he was not altogether successful, for his language was sometimes more than a little rough-hewn. Yet his verse flows smoothly, as a rule, except for the obnoxious prevalence of words of Latin derivation, especially in rhyme, which was a besetting sin of the writers who followed Lydgate. He recounted his stories with directness and simplicity, indeed; he gave them rapid movement; he could impart a dramatic quality to dialogue. Such virtues as these, taken along with the gentle fancy and the sense of humor that crop out in his verse, make him pleasant to read, even though he was only a second-rate versifier. The playful modesty and the happy humor of the man are well illustrated in the prologue to *Margaret*, when he bids his friend Thomas Burgh conceal his authorship wherever cavillers may be present: —

and principally
At hoom at Caunbrygge, in your hows,
Where wyttys be manye ryht capcyows
And subtyl; wych sone my lewydnesse
Shuld aspye. Wherfore, of jentylnesse,
Kepyth it as cloos as ye best kan
A lytyl whyle; and not-for-than
If ye algate shul it owth lete go,
Be not aknowe whom it comyth fro,
But seyth, as ye doon undyrstand,
It was you sent owt of Agelond
From a frend of yourys that usyth to selle
Goode hors at feyrys, and doth dwelle
A lytyl fro the Castel of Bolyngbrok
In a good town, wher ye fyrst tok
The name of Thomas, and clepyd is Borgh
In al that cuntre evene thorgh and thorgh.
And thus ye shul me weel excuse
And make that men shul not muse
To have of me ony suspicyoun.

Of less interest than Osbern's book, perhaps, are the translations of the *Legenda Aurea* that were made in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, though one of them has very considerable merit and much historical importance. Two renderings of this famous work, the most celebrated collection of saints' lives from the thirteenth century forwards, are known to me. The first is a mere fragment of seven lives in verse, preserved only in the Vernon manuscript, the remarkable thesaurus of legends already described. Indeed, it appears certain that these seven poems are rather random excerpts from the *Legenda Aurea* than the remains of a complete translation. They are not arranged in the order of the original, and give no

evidence of having been selected for any definite reason. Their subjects are Paula, Ambrose, a "certain virgin in Antioch," Theodora, Bernard, Augustine, and Savinian and Savina. They were versified in the short rhyming couplets so popular with writers of narrative, and were made in southern England about the middle of the fourteenth century.

The later translation was complete: a prose rendering made with freedom but with sufficient accuracy. It was finished in 1438, and was perhaps the work of more than one writer, though of this we cannot be sure. There is significance as to the audience for whom the translation was made in the fact that one of the best extant manuscripts was bequeathed in 1460 by "John Burton, citysen and mercer of London," to his daughter and, after her decease, to "the prioresse and the covent of Halywelle for evermore." The translator (or translators), it should be stated, followed the order and the text of the French version by Jean de Vignay rather than the Latin, though there are slight differences in content between the French and English translations which can be explained only on the hypothesis that the Latin was used as final authority. One manuscript (Trinity College, Dublin, 319) contains a series of twenty of the lives,[1] which have been copied down quite without reference to the original order of the book. Although both the beginning and the ending of this

[1] My thanks are due to Miss E. M. Overend, of Dublin, who very kindly verified the contents of this manuscript for me and copied specimens of the text, thus enabling me to identify it.

manuscript are now wanting, it is clear that the scribe made large drafts on the collection without feeling bound to arrange the legends except according to his own whim. In 1483 William Caxton printed the complete translation, though his edition varies from the text of the manuscripts in many particulars. In making his book, Caxton re-arranged the contents; he frequently changed the wording; he added more than seventy lives, some of them from the appendix of the *Legenda Aurea* and others from French and native sources; and he inserted the celebrated etymologies of saints' names, which had been left out of the English translation in its earlier state. Indeed, he used so much liberty that he made the book virtually a new treasury of legends, only embodying a famous collection as the chief of its constituent parts.

This rendering of the *Legenda Aurea*, both in its earlier and later stages, represents the best tradition of prose translation in the fifteenth century. It may be said to stand in somewhat the same relation to saints' lives as *Le Morte Darthur* stands to romances. Many of the qualities that distinguish Malory's work are present in this: the fashion in which it was put together as a compendium, the spirit which informs it, and even the style in which it is written. It has neither had, to be sure, nor deserved, the continuous success of the *Morte Darthur;* but it has not deserved the oblivion that has overtaken it. In language it stands similarly between the old and the new. The undulations of its prose should please many readers of today, just as Malory's readers find delight in his style.

Caxton, it will be noticed, was working on the two books at about the same time: he printed the legends in 1483, the romances in 1485. He was, it would appear, appreciative of the charms of each.

In the second decade of the sixteenth century, another famous Latin legendary was epitomized and translated into English as *The Kalendre of the newe Legende of Englande*. It was printed by Richard Pynson in 1516. Of itself it would call for comment only as perhaps the last collection of saints' lives in the vernacular that was made before the Reformation; but as the latest form of a work, the life of which extended through two hundred years, it deserves special mention. In the second quarter of the fourteenth century, an industrious compiler, John of Tynemouth, had completed a great *Sanctilogium Angliæ*, which was by all odds the most complete collection of the lives of saints in any way connected with Great Britain and Ireland that had ever been attempted. Apparently he had labored over his task for many years and garnered his materials in many places, though he seems chiefly to have used the great library of St. Albans both for his *Sanctilogium* and for his *Historia Aurea*. The former work contained the lives of one hundred and fifty-six saints, excerpted, abridged, or compiled, as well as even more tales of various kinds that illustrated these and other legends. The lives were arranged in the order of the calendar. In the course of the fifteenth century this collection was re-arranged in alphabetical order, enlarged by the insertion of many *narrationes*, and given

a new title: *De Sanctis Angliæ.* This revision may possibly have been made by John Capgrave, a learned Augustinian who wrote both in Latin and in English. Although there is no proof that he had a hand in revising the legendary, his name has been more commonly associated with it than that of its original compiler. Again, early in the sixteenth century, the work was revised, and enlarged by the addition of fifteen new lives. In this form it was known as *Nova Legenda Angliæ,* and printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1516, the same year in which the English epitome was published.

This long and varied history was not merited by the literary quality of the work, for it had not even pretensions to value of that sort; but the completeness of the collection which it preserved and the vast though uncritical erudition which it embodied gave it genuine worth. Indeed, it is indispensable to the hagiologist who is interested in the lives of British saints, concerning some of whom we have no other record. In its abridged English form it has less importance, naturally, since that was intended but to whet the reader's appetite for the complete work. The translation indicates, none the less, that the demand for collections of saints' lives in the vernacular had not spent itself as the Reformation approached.

Three books of instruction and edification, two from the fourteenth century and the third from the fifteenth, one an original compilation and the other two transla-

tions, may serve to complete the illustrations drawn from collections of legends as to the importance of the *genre* during the later Middle Ages.

Of portentous length and of facile, if very crude, workmanship, *Cursor Mundi* gave its readers a sketch of sacred history from the creation to the establishment of the Christian Church, the whole arranged according to the seven ages of the world. It was written in the short rhyming couplets used in two of the legendaries already discussed. Of its origin nothing is known, except that it was made in the North about the beginning of the fourteenth century. Though the book has little distinction, save of purpose, the reader is sometimes startled by an apt phrase that seems out of place among its dull fellows. The author's aim, however, was sufficiently magnificent.

> All this werld, ar this boke bline,
> Wid cristes help i sal our-rine,
> And telle sum ieste principale.

With a scheme of composition so wide as this, he naturally gathered into his work many legendary stories. Thus he incorporated in his narrative the entire history of the cross from the mission of Seth to Paradise for the oil of mercy to the finding of the rood by St. Helena. The passages which he took from this tale of marvels he scattered through his book in proper chronological sequence. As Professor Napier showed long since, he took the material for his version from two sources: a popular Latin prose *Legend of the Cross-Wood*

and an Old French poem on the same subject, portions of which he translated almost line for line. Similarly he drew on an Old French poem by Wace, *L'Etablissement de la fête de la conception Notre-Dame* for elaborate accounts of the conception of the Virgin and the beginning of the festival in celebration of it. The ever popular *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and *Gospel of Nicodemus* furnished him with stories of the childhood of Jesus and the harrowing of Hell, while from a work by Isidore of Seville, *De Vita et Morte Sanctorum*, he took a complete series of romantic narratives dealing with the apocryphal acts of the apostles. Furthermore he incorporated with his work a poem on the *Assumption of Mary*, which had been made in the South in the latter part of the previous century. It will be seen that the author of *Cursor Mundi* was very far from being content with purely scriptural incident. Like all historians of the Middle Ages, he was, perforce, a legend-writer also.

In the translation of William de Wadington's *Manuel des Pechiez*, made by Robert Mannyng of Brunne and quaintly entitled *Handlyng Synne*, to which reference has already been made, we find the same conditions present. Though it was designed as a moralizing work, it became at the hands of its compiler and translator a collection of tales as well. Robert, indeed, expanded the work by the insertion of new stories. His version, begun in 1303 as he himself recorded, contains a great variety of legendary stories aside from *exempla* that have nothing to do with the saints. There are many incidents from the *Vitæ*

Patrum and several from the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, the *Vision of Furseus* from Bede, as well as tales from the lives of Robert Grosteste, St. Beatrice, St. John Almoner, St. Justine, and St. John Chrysostom. More gifted than the writer of *Cursor Mundi*, this Lincolnshire man, Robert Mannyng, gave his stories a native flavor and a considerable interest in spite of — or perhaps by means of — the jogging metre that he used.

A third repository of legendary tales, translated from Latin in the course of the fifteenth century, is entitled *An Alphabet of Tales*. It is a rendering of the *Alphabetum Narrationum*, once ascribed to Etienne de Besançon but now supposed to be the work of Arnold of Liège. One of the most famous collections of *exempla* was made accessible, through this translation, to English readers. Though primarily designed as a store-house from which preachers might take illustrations for their sermons, the book has more interest than could be expected of an encyclopædia. Either in Latin or in English — for the English rendering is fluent — it is eminently readable. The wealth of anecdote from very various sources that it contains has much to attract the browsing idler and much to teach the serious student. Among books of mediæval *exempla* this was not the least successful; and such books were at least next of kin to the legendaries, since saints figure so largely in their pages among philosophers and men of secular life.

The foregoing review of saints' lives, as they appear in legendaries and in a few characteristic works of history or edification, has, I hope, shown at least two things:

the continuous and penetrating interest felt by all classes of society in the legends of the Church, and the responsiveness of the legendary type to the prevailing influences and tendencies of Middle English literature. The first point, indeed, is illustrated to better advantage by these collections than by the separate lives that will be discussed in the next chapter; the second will be further explained, and perhaps better explained, by a study of individual legends, which varied in method of treatment and in the emphasis laid on one or another element of the material, according to the taste of the writer and of his public. It will be evident, I think, that to men of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries legends were regarded not only as an important branch of literature, but as indispensable food for the intellect and emotion of all estates. The makers of these books of legends discovered no new way of setting forth the stories they told, no new fashion of appeal; they followed Latin and French models, in general, with circumspection if not with servility. The personal adaptation of Osbern Bokenam was exceptional. What the collectors accomplished was the provision for clergy and people of extensive and readable compendiums, which served a great variety of purposes. Without being able to write great poetry or prose, they gave adequate expression to matters that were attractive of themselves both to the learned and the simple. The public, clearly, made no insistent demand for beauty of form if only the substance were at hand.

The popularity of the legend type during this age is shown by a comparison between the collections just described and the romances of the same period. Romances in verse and prose were unquestionably vastly liked, and the *genre* was much cultivated. Yet not until the time of Malory was a compendium of even one branch of them ever made in English. The total number of Middle English legends, moreover, is considerably greater than the total number of romances. Adventure was enhanced, we may suppose, when it wore the livery of fact and had the warrant of ecclesiastical authority.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONQUEST TO THE REFORMATION. II

THE COURSE OF THE LEGEND

THE history of saints' lives during the Middle English period was characterized not only by the making of collections, which we have considered in the previous chapter, but by the writing of individual legends. Separately composed and never included in any thesaurus, except as they were sometimes brought together by scribes who gathered diverse materials in a single volume, these lives in verse and prose are quite as important as the great series. They represent, indeed, the best and the worst of legend-writing during the period: some of them being works admirable for literary quality and biographical interest, and others despicable from almost any point of view. It will be illuminating for us to trace their course, to see how responsive they were to the spirit of the age, how representative of its literature. The mediums in which they were written and the sources from which they sprang must engage our attention. Backward glances, meanwhile, at the great collections which we have studied will enable us to see the development of the *genre* as a whole during the vigorous and interesting centuries that preceded the Reformation.

Perhaps the phenomenon that first impresses one when reviewing the period is the complete extinction of legend-writing in English between the Norman Conquest and the end of the twelfth century. As has been noted in the chapter on prose legends in Old English, it is sometimes hard to see just when the type, as far as English was concerned, trailed off into silence. The silence came, none the less. Older works were copied, whether in a spirit of reaction against the new order, or simply because newer works could not be come by, we do not know. The writing of Latin legends proceeded, as we have seen, industriously and even brilliantly; the writing of legends in French was established; but the English legend was smothered. At least, there is preserved to us no saintly biography of the new era, either in English verse or in English prose, that can by any possibility be dated before the closing years of the twelfth century.

The eclipse of English literature after the Conquest is sufficiently familiar to all of us; it is a commonplace of text-books. It has been so much emphasized, indeed, that scholars have found it necessary to prove at length — and students to learn by the discipline of dull reading — the nexus between old and new. It has been needful to show that the eclipse did not mean the extinction of the English language, or of letters in England. The great forms were not forgotten. Thus the legend flourished, in reality, as we have seen, although lives of saints were no longer written in English. Anglo-Norman authors, who wrote freely, had no reason for writing other than their

own or the Latin tongue. It is not, then, surprising that we have no English legend from the twelfth century save a fugitive *Vision of St. Paul*, though it must be said that in the case of no other literary type was the eclipse more complete.

This *Vision of St. Paul*, indeed, barely falls within the limits of our study. It is a prose rendering of that vision of the tortures of hell which Paul saw under the personal guidance of the Archangel Michael. This vision, which was to be several times versified in Middle English — known also to Dante, it appears — was translated during the second half of the twelfth century, somewhere in southwestern England, into smooth if not brilliant prose. It is known to us through a single manuscript, where it is found imbedded in a group of homilies; and it is significant as a late example of a pre-Conquest fashion.

When, as the result of forces too complicated for analysis here — forces ethnological and social as well as political — English began once more to be important as a literary medium, lives of saints had swung into a new orbit. It would not be quite fair to say that the influence of France remained dominant, because the path of literature for Englishmen no less than Frenchmen had been changed. English and French authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries wrote in much the same fashion because they were subject to the same influences. They split chiefly in the matter of language; for a considerable time, at least, the rise of nationality did not otherwise greatly affect them. The influence of France had done

its work by the thirteenth century: it had made England over in the matter of literature as in many other ways. Thenceforward there can be traced, but only very gradually, a progressive separation between the two literatures, which did not reach its widest until the close of the sixteenth century.

Legends merely followed the course of other *genres*. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century the relations between France and England, whether the countries were at peace or at war, remained too intimate for an independent species of the type to develop as one had developed in Old English times. Little by little, variations appeared — national peculiarities cropped out. They were, however, comparatively speaking, unimportant. In that they soon ran their course and died without producing a lasting effect on later literature, they were barren manifestations. Had it not been for the Reformation, another account might possibly have to be given of them; but the Reformation cut so clean across the history of the type as a whole that speculation as to what might have been is singularly idle. As far as legends are concerned, the Reformation is a fact of quite portentous importance.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that the thirteenth century was the time when the Anglo-Norman legend chiefly flourished. It is not remarkable, then, that during this time there should have been produced comparatively few lives of saints in English.

At the very beginning of the thirteenth century, or possibly some few years before it opened, three legends

were written somewhere in the south of England which mark the reviving practice. It is perhaps not without significance, in view of the cult of woman which by this time had become focussed, through passionate devotion, on the Mother of the Lord, that these three works should be lives of women saints. They were, moreover, the lives of three virgins who stood pre-eminently for the ideal of chastity: *Catharine of Alexandria*, *Margaret*, and *Juliana*. The opinion, held by scholars at one time, that all three biographies were the work of one man, the author of the *Ancren Riwle* (or *Rule of Nuns*), has been discarded; but it is reasonable to believe that the same impulse that led to the instruction of the three high-born anchoresses in the duties and privileges of their lot resulted also in the celebration of the three martyrs of the early church.

As has been shown by Professor Einenkel, the *Catharine* was probably written before the other two works and was known to the author of them. The three legends bear a marked resemblance to one another, however, in content and style as well as in language. The lives of Margaret and Juliana had earlier been treated in English; but St. Catharine, the most famous of the three, had never before been the subject of an English legend. Indeed, the story of this militant defender of the faith did not become generally known in the West until the tenth and eleventh centuries — too late for use by the pre-Conquest hagiographers — though it had in the later Middle Ages so remarkable a vogue. It furnishes the extremest case of a virgin combating, not without inso-

lence, the powers of evil; and as such it made its appeal. One cannot deny that the Middle Ages liked to be hit hard on any occasion by the dominant idea. The legends of Margaret and Juliana, as well as of Catharine, seem to our taste harshly crude; yet they satisfied earlier generations, no doubt, by the very characteristics that seem to us unfortunate.

The three early Middle English legends that we are considering have no remarkable literary graces. All three are written, indeed, in a curious alliterative prose that has been considered by some scholars (without warrant, I believe) a form of verse; but this stylistic peculiarity is rather an affected mannerism than an instrument of art, and does little or nothing to make them acceptable narratives. The author of the *Catharine* curtailed very greatly the long harangues and learned allusions that ornamented his Latin original, yet he did not altogether rescue the story from tedium. His greatest gift lay in picturesque turns of descriptive phrase and occasional passages of dramatic vividness. He was like a Cynewulf to whom had been denied the power of fusing his materials into organic unity and of sustaining his glowing vision for long at a time. His most successful passage is a picture of Paradise, seemingly based on the same Latin text as an Old High German poem called *Himmel und Helle.* Had he been able to reach more frequently the height of romantic beauty that makes this interpolation memorable, he would deserve a place between Cynewulf and the author of the *Pearl.* Unhappily his moments of in-

spiration were few, though the *Catharine*, as compared with the *Margaret* and the *Juliana*, is a work of considerable merit. Nowhere do the latter rise above commonplace translations of the somewhat commonplace Latin passions upon which they were based, and as translations they are by no means adequate. Only because of their chronological position do they have much significance.

More important in every respect is a much-copied poetical life of St. Margaret, *Meidan Margerete*, which was composed in Dorsetshire or the vicinity during the first half of the century. The oldest manuscript of the work that we possess [1] does not represent the text in its purity: it had already suffered considerably from the carelessness of scribes. At the same time, it retains the essential characteristics of the poem unimpaired and enables one to judge, much better than from the fourteenth and fifteenth century copies that have come down to us, its vigor and grace. Whether or not the original manuscript was a translation from a poem in Old French I am as yet unable to say, though I suspect this to have been the case.[2] In any event, it depended ultimately, as Dr. Krahl showed long since, on the same Latin prose version that was the source of the *Margaret* discussed above — the text of Mombritius. It represents the

[1] Printed by Hickes, *Thesaurus*, I, 224 *ff.* and after him by Cockayne, *Seinte Marherete* (E.E.T.S. 13) pp. 34 *ff.*, and Horstmann. *Altenglische Legenden* N. F. pp. 488 *ff.*, from MS. Trin. Coll. Camb. B. 14.39, missing from the library from 1863 to 1896.

[2] It was not based on any Anglo-Norman version yet published.

Latin, however, in quite a different way. The poet was not content with translation: he transformed the legend in the spirit and style of the romances that were beginning to be greatly in vogue. He made of the legend a new work, swift of movement, vivid of detail, and yet reverent of attitude. The figure of the saint became a most appealing one in its maidenly purity and flaming audacity. Among the many mediæval representations of the ever popular St. Margaret, none brings out more clearly the artistic and spiritual possibilities of the theme. The dry light of the Latin passion is flooded with warmth by the poet's imaginative conception of the young saint. Somewhat more than three hundred lines in monorhymed quatrains sufficed him for his picture: adequate in every respect to the requirements of the *genre* at its best. In rhythm, in dialogue, and in description the poem recalls the better traditional ballads, just as do some of the earlier English romances. To that extent it may perhaps be said to represent a native modification of Anglo-Norman literary fashions. Though the text we possess is marred by errors, three detached stanzas may give some notion of the qualities of the poem as it left the hand of its maker. The first is part of the appeal of the tyrant Olibrius to Margaret; the second and third are descriptive of her martyrdom.

Lef on me ant be my wif! Ful wel the mai spede:
Auntioge and Asie scaltou hav to mede;
Ciclatoun ant purpel pal scaltou have to wede;
Wid alle the metes of my lond ful wel i scal the fede.

. . . . . .

Tho ho com widout the toun ther me ir sculde slo,
Al siwede hire that ever mitte go.
The wind bigun to blowen; the sonne wert al blo;
Thet folc fel to then erthe, ne wisten ho hire nout tho.
. . . . . .
Michael ant Gabriel ant Raffael, here fere,
Cherubin ant Serafin, a thousend ther were;
Mit tapres ant mit sensers to hevene he ir bere,
To hore loverdes blisse; ho was ym lef ant dere.

To realize how uneven was the success of the attempt to turn legendary material into the mould of romance, it is only necessary to consider, in contrast to *Meidan Margerete*, a *St. Eustace* written about the middle of the century. This poem, in the common tail-rhyme stanza of six verses, was also made in southwestern England and was probably translated from an Old French version; but it has nothing of the charm of the slightly earlier work. The events of the story are confused. It lacks even the personal names that might give a sense of reality and vividness. As far as there is any attempt at painting the scenes in the saint's life, they are conventionalized into insignificance. A story of romantic possibilities is spoiled by the crudity of its presentation; it has been squeezed dry of emotion and well-nigh of sense. By such poor imitations of the meaner romances the legend could not thrive.

Of a different stamp was an *Assumption of Our Lady*, the oldest form of which seems to have been made in one of the middle southern counties not long after 1250. The author of this legend, which became immensely

popular, did not ape the writers of romance, but appealed straightforwardly to the religious sense of his audience. Whatever merit the performance possesses is due to the simplicity of this appeal. Quite without affectation, it rehearses the apocryphal life of the Blessed Virgin after the death of Christ and relates with dramatic detail the circumstances of her passing from earth to heaven. Pale figures move and speak against a background as pallid as themselves. The verse is clumsy rather than supple: the common four-stressed rhyming pairs show not infrequent use of assonance. The diction is colorless, and too often tags fill out the measure. Despite these faults, however, the poem has some of the good qualities of early religious painting — a similar directness in applying means to the given end. Religious instruction and religious inspiration, in a spirit of sweet naturalness, were the evident purposes of the author. The faintly humorous touch, by which St. Thomas of India is twitted with being a little late on important occasions, marks the wholesome tone of naïve realism.

It was, no doubt, this spirit in the narrative rather than its absolute literary excellence that gave it wide and long-continued popularity. It was incorporated with both the southern and the northern legend cycles; it was taken over by the author of *Cursor Mundi;* it was turned, in the Midlands, into an independent poem in tail-rhyme stanzas. Indeed, the transformation involved by the change from the original metre to the long couplets of the *South-English Legendary* was a considerable one. Since the

manuscripts containing the work range in date from the end of the thirteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century, it is evident that for about two hundred years the poem was prized throughout the whole of England. Interpretative as it was of the best religious sentiment of the age, it merited its continued fame; nor, viewed in this light, can it properly be despised by us.

About the middle of the century, also, must have been written the first form of *The Harrowing of Hell*, the earliest rendering of any part of the Latin *Gospel of Nicodemus* that was attempted in Middle English. It has the further interest of its narrative method, which is semi-dramatic. Save for the prologue, the entire action is given by speeches definitely assigned to various personages of the story. On this account it has long been regarded as the earliest specimen of drama in English, and has enjoyed, to a corresponding degree, the fame that novelty brings. The opinion of scholars has not been unanimous, to be sure, about its precise relationship to the miracle plays that were to come; but the interest in it has been continuous. For my own part, I am unable to believe that it should be regarded as a conscious effort towards dramatic representation, even of an academic sort. That it illustrates, however, the impulse which was to make drama a powerful literary agency at the close of the Middle Ages I am not inclined to deny. It is more valuable from this point of view, indeed, than as a legend, since in the latter respect it is merely a reworking of the *Descensus Christi ad Infernos*. In its own day the poem

must have won a very considerable popularity. The three manuscripts by which it is known to us, none of them later than the middle of the fourteenth century, vary so widely in the text they present that we must suppose it to have been many times copied. These variations make it difficult to determine the dialect in which the poem was first written; but the rather inadequate evidence that we have points to the East Midland district as the home of the author.

From the last quarter of the century, as nearly as it can be dated, comes a long poem on the *Childhood of Jesus*, known to us only by a copy in the oldest manuscript of the *South-English Legendary*. It is a work of nearly two thousand lines, in short rhyming couplets, and recounts an extraordinary number of the adventures attributed to Christ by the writers of the apocryphal gospels. M. Paul Meyer showed, as long ago as 1889, that the English poem was a translation from a thirteenth century *Enfances Jésus Christ*, of which two redactions are extant. He was wrong, I believe, in thinking that the translation was made from the earlier form of the two; indeed, it seems to me quite clearly an almost literal rendering of the later form, which was made by an Anglo-Norman versifier. In any case, the English poem owes nothing save its halting verse to the translator from the southern counties. The French author, on the other hand, appears to have taken his material from two different Latin texts (the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and a book popular in the thirteenth century, entitled *De Infantia*

Salvatoris); and the realistic tone in which the fantastic miracles are related was certainly due to him. The importance of the work, as far as England is concerned, lies in the fact that it was the first account of incidents in the apocryphal life of Christ destined to become deeply imbedded in the consciousness of the people. Of a northern *Childhood* I shall speak below; a recently discovered ballad, *The Bitter Withy*, echoes two or three of the events; and, more distantly, the chap-book *History of Tom Thumb* shows how one of the stories entered into the imagination of the English country-side.

Certain other thirteenth century legends in verse may perhaps best be considered in connection with their appearance in a celebrated miscellany known as the Auchinleck Manuscript, which belongs to the Advocates' Library of Edinburgh. Into this book there was gathered, during the early part of the fourteenth century, a variety of works both secular and religious. Among them the scribe included eight legends: *Gregory*, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, *Adam and Eve*, *The Harrowing of Hell*, *Margaret*, *Catharine*, *Mary Magdalene*, and *The Birth of Mary and Christ*. *The Harrowing of Hell* has been described above, the *Margaret* is a poor text of the *Meidan Margerete* already described, and *The Birth of Mary and Christ* is from the *South-English Legendary*. The other poems, however, deserve mention as illustrating the various kinds of verse legends in vogue at the end of the thirteenth century.

The *Gregory*, which is found also in two other manu-

scripts, tells in simple stanzas of eight four-beat lines, and without art, one of the most extraordinary tales ever invented. The story connects itself, supposedly, with Gregory the Great, though nothing more radically different from the life of that saint could be imagined than this tissue of impossibilities. With its motives of double incest, of a key cast into the ocean to be found again in the belly of a fish, and of an unwelcome child thrown into the sea, there is no lack of sensational incident. The English poem, which was translated in the East Midlands from a French version of the tale, is a very crude performance. Although imperfectly preserved to us even in the oldest manuscript (Vernon), it is evident that the translation was badly done. Very darkly in the English form can be seen the well-wrought outlines of the wild story, which had been firmly established in popular favor by the setting of knightly manners that it exhibited. Some traces of the trappings of romance remain, together with a sober deference to lofty estate, secular or religious, which romance-writers often exhibited. To nothing save a taste for extravagant fiction could the legend ever have ministered; and indeed, its combination of the theme of Œdipus with incidents common to folk-story served, after transformation, to enrich the stock of secular romance. Professor J. D. Bruce has made this clear.

St. Patrick's Purgatory, a poem in six-line tail-rhyme stanzas, seems to have been composed in the East Midland district. It was a free rendering — the first, save perhaps a version in the *South-English Legendary* — of

the remarkable vision of the other world written by Henry of Saltrey towards the end of the twelfth century. Henry's Latin book, usually known as *Tractatus de Purgatorio*, gained immediate popularity and was transcribed and adapted with bewildering frequency. Indeed, its long history in literature and folk tradition makes it, possibly, the most influential vision of the sort except Dante's own. The version of the Auchinleck MS. was made by a poet of real imaginative attainment. Although he had no metrical facility and was sometimes clumsy about passing from scene to scene, he had a very real power of description. The adventures of the knight Owain amidst the torments of Purgatory and the delights of the Terrestrial Paradise were told with a vividness and a personal grace that make the poem compare not unfavorably with the *Espurgatoire* of Marie de France. The unknown poet was a lover of beautiful sound and color, and was fond of the catalogues so often successfully used by mediæval writers. A single stanza must suffice to show the quality of his verse at its best.

> Fair were her erbers with floures,
> Rose and lili divers coloures,
> Primrol and parvink,
> Mint, fetherfoy, and eglentere,
> Calombin and mo ther were
> Than ani man mai bithenke.

The *Adam and Eve* of the Auchinleck MS. is a fragment in short rhyming couplets. It is a translation, or rather a new arrangement, of material found in the *Vita Adæ et Evæ*, which is closely connected with the treatise *De*

Ligno Sanctæ Crucis. Both these works were used otherwise by English writers in verse and prose. To the *History of the Holy Rood-Tree* reference has already been made; and the compilers of *Cursor Mundi* and the *North-English Homily Collection* also drew upon the legends. Later uses of them will be taken up in due course. The complicated relationships of all the versions in Latin and the vernacular cannot well be summarized briefly. The relationships are of less importance to us, at the moment, however, than the fact that the poem mentioned above attests the continued interest in the story past the Conquest and at the end of the thirteenth century. The fragment from this period begins with a brief account of the fall of man. After narrating Seth's journey to Paradise for the oil of mercy, and Adam's death, it succinctly reports the history of the world to the Deluge.

Of a very different movement from the poem just discussed is the *Catharine*, the third of the new legends in the Auchinleck MS. This poem of ninety-nine eight-line stanzas is one of the most successful versions of the legend of St. Catharine of Alexandria that has ever been penned. By curtailing the long harangues and by narrating the events of her trial and martyrdom with breathless vigor, the author made of it a most exciting narrative. One would think less well of the poem, to be sure, if we were dependent for our knowledge of it upon the Auchinleck MS. Happily, a better text exists in a manuscript of Caius College, Cambridge. The art of this Midland poet of the later thirteenth century was an art of haste: at a

furious gallop he plunged through the story. Nevertheless, he did no wrong to the heroic elements in the passion, but rather intensified them by his headlong style. Very much as the author of *Havelok the Dane*, a popular romance of the day, got his effects by rapidity and energy, this poet achieved vividness through vigor. The two writers, no doubt, had in mind very much the same kind of audience. That the English maker of the legend was a wholly independent poet, however, seems to me unlikely. I have a strong impression, as yet unconfirmed by proof, that he was turning an Anglo-Norman version of the legend into English, and that some of the merits of the work are due to his original. At the same time, there would be much to praise, even should this be true.

Less important than the *Catharine* in every way is the *Mary Magdalene* of the Auchinleck MS. The loss of the opening lines of this pedestrian piece of verse-making in rhymed couplets cannot be greatly regretted, for the legend has no marked value except in relation to other versions of the story from the same general period. One of these, the *Mary Magdalene* which is found in various manuscripts of the *South-English Legendary*, is a poem of very considerable merit. It was written farther south in the Midlands than the Auchinleck version and in the long couplets of the *Legendary* to which it became attached.[1] Its date, apparently, was about 1275 or a little

[1] A theory of Horstmann's that it was originally composed in stanzaic form was satisfactorily disposed of by Knörk in his Berlin dissertation of 1889.

earlier. The romantic tale of the Magdalene's apostolate in Provence, which for many centuries was regarded as sober history, was here related in a fitting style, picturesque of phrase, rapid of movement. Another version, found in one of the expanded forms of the *North-English Homily Collection*, is less good, though more vigorous than the Auchinleck poem. The relationship among these three variants of the theme, which have various points of contact, and an unpublished poem in a Cottonian manuscript (Titus A XXVI) awaits investigation. That they were taken, more or less directly, from the same Latin source, is clear; but only so much.

From the latter end of the century comes also a legend of *Marina*, preserved to us in the very interesting Harleian manuscript (2253) that contains our best collection of early Middle English lyrics. This *Marina* is an undistinguished piece of versification in rhyming couplets, probably made in the western part of southern England. It tells, rather clumsily, the story of the maiden who was introduced into a convent of monks, where she lived as a man until her death, not without penitential sufferings. The theme was a favorite one with mediæval collectors of *exempla*, and this tale is among the best-known excerpts from the *Vitæ Patrum*. The Harleian version greatly resembles a slightly later one in the *North-English Homily Collection*, and at some points the two disagree with the Latin texts that we know. However, the northern poem was probably an independent translation, as it is certainly a terser and more vigorous piece of work.

At about the same time were written two metrical versions of the *Vision of St. Paul*, which had already been translated in prose. The first of these new renderings is curious in two ways. For one thing, it discards the usual machinery incident to St. Paul's visit in Hell, and consists merely of a recital of the eleven pains of Hell by a man returned from death. In the second place, the introductory verses are French, although the poem is entirely independent of any treatment of the *Vision* in Old French that has as yet been found. However, the writer, who subscribed himself Hugh, may well have translated some version unknown to our day. Nothing whatever has been discovered concerning this Hugh, save that he must have lived in southern England. His work is not important, except as a curiosity, for he had no great skill as a legend-writer.

The second of these new forms of the *Vision* follows one of the commoner versions of the Latin text, and was doubtless a direct revision of it. Though preserved only in an important manuscript of the *South-English Legendary* (Laud 108), this poem in tail-rhyme stanzas was probably made in the northern part of the East Midland district. It has no special merit as a translation or as a piece of verse narrative. Indeed, the freedom with which the original was treated added nothing to the effectiveness of the vision. Sufficiently clear, but not particularly interesting from either the literary or the hagiographical point of view, the work need not detain us.

At the end of the century also, as nearly as the date can

be determined, was composed a very interesting poem on *Jacob and Joseph*, which its editor somewhat uncertainly ascribes to the southern part of the Midlands. It was written in the long flowing couplets of the *South-English Legendary*, and in style irresistibly recalls that work, though it seems never to have been a part of it. It recalls also, be it said, the *Meidan Margerete* of the earlier part of the century, and has some of the merits of that charming legend. The same tradition of romantic minstrelsy, no doubt, lay behind all such writers: a tradition that was eventually to give us the better English ballads and much good modern narrative verse. The materials of *Jacob and Joseph* were taken from the Old Testament without large addition; but they were treated with a breadth of human feeling that makes the figures of the story live again in the poet's swinging rhythms. Badly though the work has fared at the hands of copyists, its dramatic vividness and its homely grace have not been wholly obscured. Take, for example, the entrance of the merchants with the young Joseph into "Egypt land." The picture that one gets is of a band of merchants coming into a rich mediæval city, gay with color, pulsing with life. Whether written in or out of a monastery, *Jacob and Joseph* is no product of cloistered anæmia, but of the vigorous current that flowed through the Church to better the life of the times. The boy who heard it once read or recited would never, we may be sure, forget the story of Joseph's adventures.

The great *South-English Legendary*, described in the

chapter preceding this, was brought together, we must remember, in the last quarter of the thirteenth century; at about the time, that is, of the legends just discussed. It shows the activity of the type in the Southwest towards the end of the century, as the individual legends indicate its popularity in other parts of the South and in the Midlands. In the course of the fourteenth century the North of England was to witness a very considerable production of legends in the vernacular, but for some not very evident reason the form did not win renewed acceptance there until that time. It may well be that the feudal rule of the Norman nobles delayed the reaction to English writing north of the Humber somewhat longer than in the South, partly because the district was remote and less open to the influences of the growing nationalism. If so, the wars of Edward I with Scotland must have helped to spread the new spirit, for Northumberland became again, as in former ages, the highway of armies.

It is a curious fact, indeed, that almost all the legends from the first part of the fourteenth century were written in the North. In that section, as we have learned, the *North-English Homily Collection*, one of the great repositories of saintly lore, was compiled soon after the century opened. Aside from it, only a handful of saints' lives was produced until about 1350, but not one of these was written in a Southern dialect. Quite possibly the disturbed conditions incident upon the misrule of Edward II may be one of the reasons for the shift of legendary production, or at least for the failure of southern writers to con-

tinue their earlier activity. Whatever the cause, the break is well marked.

Between 1300 and 1325 there were written in the North a verse rendering of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and a poem on the *Childhood of Jesus* which is to be distinguished from the one made towards the end of the preceding century.

As we have seen, themes from the apocryphal gospels had for centuries been favorites in England; but before 1300 no one had attempted a poetical translation of the popular *Gospel of Nicodemus*. The success of the undertaking, as far as the Middle Ages are concerned, can be estimated from the fact that the four manuscripts of the poem now known were written a century or more after the translation was first made, and imply the existence of numerous other copies. Moreover, as Dr. Craigie has shown, the York cycle of miracle plays borrowed extensively from the poem. The popularity that it enjoyed was, indeed, well merited by its qualities. Though rudely executed, it is ingenious: in metre the elaborate twelve-line stanzas in which it is written requiring a degree of skill for their making that would baffle most modern poets. In spite of the self-imposed difficulties of his task, the poet succeeded in weaving his rhythm into the long narrative (about eighteen hundred lines) with dramatic vigor and a not inconsiderable degree of romantic feeling. Like the verse of the better miracle plays, this has the solid merits of boldness and rapidity, even when it lacks grace. It is not a very accurate translation of the apocryphal

gospel, but it narrates the events of the story in a manner well calculated to impress them upon the mind of a popular audience.

The *Childhood of Jesus* is in some ways a less pretentious work than the poetical *Gospel of Nicodemus*, but in its own fashion it is quite as successful. The three manuscripts from which we know it differ from one another in content, and two of them were written by scribes in the Midlands, with consequent changes in dialect. Nevertheless, the three are merely redactions of the same poem, which in its longest form extends to nine hundred and twenty-five lines. In subject matter it covers almost the same ground as the *Childhood* from the thirteenth century; but the miracles are not ordered in the same way, and there is no discernible relationship between the two poems. Indeed, no direct source for the later one has been discovered. It is written in twelve-line stanzas, of which the first eight of the four-stressed lines are rhymed alternately on two rhymes, while the final quatrain introduces two new sounds. Perhaps the peculiar fluency of the narrative is in some degree the result of this metrical scheme. In any case, the effect gained is rapid and smooth: the same undecorated and unshadowed flow of verse that was often obtained by romancers who did not try for the bold staccato movement ridiculed by Chaucer in his *Sir Thopas*.

During the first half of the century there was also made in the North a *St. Alexis* in verse, of which four manuscripts are known. The same legend was included in the

North-English Homily Collection, but the two versions are altogether distinct. The independent poem was based, in my opinion, on the Latin of the *Alphabetum Narrationum*, the important collection of *exempla* now ascribed to Arnold of Liège.[1] The cult of St. Alexis was widely popular in England, as can be seen from the fact that the legend was six times versified during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The extravagant asceticism of the story was perhaps what commended it to mediæval taste; but I believe that it owed quite as much to the romantic picturesqueness of the narrative. Alexis, it will be recalled, deserted wealth and bride for beggary, and returned after a lapse of years to die a beggar in his own father's house. The swift turns of such a tale could not fail to be pleasing to an imaginative folk, quite apart from its spiritual appeal. The northern poem that we are considering owes less, indeed, to the skill of its maker than to the story with which he was dealing. Unlike the version in the northern collection of legends, this was obviously written for oral recitation, and it has both the good and the bad qualities of many such productions. The tail-rhyme stanzas go swinging onward quickly, with a touch of pathos here, a bit of swift dialogue there, but without much vividness of scene or much dignity. Like a good deal of Middle English verse, the poem would doubtless be more impressive if scribes had not confused its language. As it stands, the reader can merely grow aware that to its early auditors it must have

[1] See p. 201, above.

seemed a pleasant and profitable thing to hear a minstrel recite.

Another interesting legend of the first half of the century is an East Midland poem entitled *Celestin*. It is a hagiographical curiosity, and in some respects is peculiar as a piece of verse-making. Although the story purports to concern a St. Celestin who died as pope in 432, it has nothing whatever to do with his actual career. Instead, it is an odd mixture of the themes of *Theophilus*, *Faustus*, and the *Seven Deadly Sins;* and it must have come to be attached to the name of Celestin in the same way that the events of the *Gregory* legend were attributed to Gregory the Great. Celestin, a dull boy at school, makes a compact with the devil to obtain knowledge, and gets preferment by the devil's aid until he is chosen pope. When he is tricked into celebrating mass "in the chapel of Jerusalem" at Rome (obviously the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, and a curious anticipation of Henry IV's Jerusalem chamber), the Seven Deadly Sins in the form of devils appear, to carry him off. After a debate with them, he is saved by the Virgin and commands his own execution. I have been unable to find any trace of this legend elsewhere, though one cannot suppose that the English author originated it. The poem, which is found in only a single manuscript, has considerable vigor of descriptive phrase and is also interesting because of its semi-dramatic form. It is, indeed, almost as dramatic in its narrative method as the thirteenth century *Harrowing of Hell*, and quite as much so in effect.

In connection with the beginnings of the drama, with the story themes that it combines, and with its curious stanzaic form (a tail-rhyme stanza of six lines, with the fifth line unrhymed) it deserves closer study than it has ever received.

About the middle of the century legend-writing began to be practised again in the south of England. At this period, it will be remembered, a partial translation in verse of the *Legenda Aurea* was made in that region. We have, besides, at least two separate legends that show a reviving interest in the *genre: Barlaam and Josaphat* and *Euphrosyne*. Neither one of them, however, has much importance, for they are merely awkward translations in four-stressed rhyming couplets and have no pretensions to literary grace. Because they are found side by side in a single manuscript and because they seem clearly to be translations from Old French, it is quite possible that the same clumsy versifier was responsible for both legends. I cannot believe that the texts on which they were based, whatever they may have been, had any value except to spread the knowledge of two famous legends among the unlearned; and certainly the English version served no other purpose.

To the mid-century may also be assigned a *Vision of St. Paul*, two other versions of which have been mentioned above. This new rendering was made on the basis of the same Latin text paraphrased by the writer of the poem in the Laud MS., but it follows the Latin much more closely. Indeed, it is a sufficiently faithful rendering,

though not a brilliant one, of a very well-known version of the story. It is in the familiar four-beat couplets. Where it was made cannot be determined, for the dialect in which it is preserved shows a mixture of Midland and Southern forms. Even more difficult to place geographically is *The Trental of St. Gregory*, a somewhat unedifying story that was versified at about this time. The work obtained a considerable popularity, though its rhymed couplets jog through the narrative rather lamely. The mixture of dialects gives no clue to the district where it was first written. Its source is likewise unknown, for that it was based on an Old French *exemplum*, as suggested by Professor Varnhagen, is extremely unlikely. It is perhaps not quite a safe index of the vogue enjoyed by the legend that it was twice copied out in the famous Vernon MS., yet that curious fact helps to confirm the impression of popularity otherwise obtained. The tale, of course, has no more connection with any real Pope Gregory than had the legendary life of Gregory versified in the thirteenth century. The *Trental* tells how his mother's ghost appeared to Gregory after he became pope, confessed a hidden fault of her youth, and begged him to say masses for her throughout a year. By so doing, he saved her soul. It will be seen that the story belongs to the lowest level of hagiographical lore. Undoubtedly it was suggested by the incident in the life of Gregory the Great, as narrated in the first instance in the early *Vita* by a monk of Whitby: how he was moved by pity to pray for the soul of the Emperor Trajan. But in this case imagi-

native tradition played with a beautiful incident unfortunately and sadly distorted it.

Somewhat after the middle of the century, a new version of the life of St. Margaret was written in the North. This *Margaret* must have been based on the same original as the remarkable thirteenth century version that we have already noticed. From the same materials, however, a work of very much less intrinsic worth was made. The short rhymed couplets of this new rendering are artlessly strung together: they convey the outlines and even the details of the story, but they give no sense of its spiritual value or of its worth as narrative. The chief claim that the unambitious effort has to recollection lies in its obvious effect upon a considerable circle of readers. We find part of it copied out in a fifteenth century common-place book at an old country-house in Suffolk; we find it selected as the text of an old print, of which the unique copy is in the Chetham Library at Manchester.

More interesting, however, is a new rendering of *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, which is likewise to be dated between 1350 and 1400. This version is entitled *Owayne Myles*, from the hero of the adventure, and is in the short rhyming couplets of so much popular verse. It tells the story of Sir Owain's visit to the purgatory in a fashion quite unpretentious but not unpleasing. Although its maker, who seems to have lived in the East Midland district, had no such gift as distinguished the anonymous poet from the same region who had earlier treated the same theme, he avoided clumsiness of diction, for the most part,

and let his verse move rapidly. The smooth flow of the narrative is, indeed, the chief merit of the version.

With a new form of the *Catharine* legend, which was made about the same time, we find ourselves in the South again. This version has been preserved in a very imperfect fashion, its form having been changed by a clumsy scribe, it would appear, from six-line stanzas to rhymed couplets. Any just estimate of the poem in its original state is thus impossible, though one cannot suppose that it had great merit. As it now stands, certainly, it lacks any beauty or special interest. It is merely a rather clumsy piece of versification that attests the continued popularity of the saint.

Of two new poems on *St. Alexis*, one of them vaguely ascribed to the second half of the century and the other to the last quarter, little need be added to what was said above concerning the northern *Alexis*. The one was written in the South; the other is preserved in so mixed a dialect that its provenience is difficult to make out. The two were obviously independent of one another, yet were based on very similar sources. The second (found only in MS. Laud 622) seems to be a translation from Old French, though not of any text now known. Both are undistinguished pieces of verse in the popular tail-rhyme stanza. Since the legend was included in the *Scottish Legend Collection* at the end of the century, as it had earlier been in the *North-English Homily Collection*, it was thus versified five times between 1300 and 1400. As I have already said, one can understand the reason for

this general interest. One must, however, regret that the interest was not satisfied by some more adequate rendering.

From these legends of the mid-century and somewhat later, undistinguished as they were — mere popularizations of stories already popular — there is great relief in turning to the product of the years 1375–1400. With those lustra began what was to be the most brilliant period in English hagiography, as far as literary merit is concerned, since the time of Cynewulf and his school. Interesting though many of the earlier Middle English lives of saints in verse had been, and admirable though some of them had been in style and treatment, there had been no uniformity of excellence among them. It is a remarkable fact, in view of this, that every legend which can be satisfactorily dated in the last quarter of the fourteenth century has, as far as my knowledge goes, undeniable worth and special interest; while the first half of the fifteenth century, along with a few mediocre lives, produced a very considerable body of legends that deserve serious consideration and praise. This was Chaucer's working-time; but not so much to his influence can be ascribed the new standard of craftsmanship as to the forces that gave Chaucer and his contemporaries the opportunity of poetical achievement. About the operation of such forces in any age we know little; and cannot in our explanations do much more than express our ignorance. Chaucer and his fellows appeared, but just why we cannot adequately expound. English had ceased to be a secondary language

in England, to be sure; the national consciousness was awake. But the country was badly ruled, there was much corruption, while war and pestilence had taken from the land an almost unexampled toll of death. Conditions were not the best for literary production, one would say. Yet the time was ripe — the writers found both impulse and skill. Saints' legends flourished by benefit of the same forces that affected other *genres*.

It is an indication, no doubt, of the heightened consciousness of English literature as an art that at this period we begin to find recorded more names of legend-writers. Not only did men who were at least semi-professional authors take to the composition of saints' lives, but casual versifiers began to record their names. The anonymity of the Middle Ages has, I think, been over-stressed by students of the vernacular literatures: the point is that writers acquired the habit of signing their works only when they came to feel that they were penning something not wholly fugitive and temporary. Names multiply in English literary history, before the end of the fourteenth century, not only because there was a stronger impulse to write the native tongue but also because the native writers felt the increasing dignity of the vernacular.

From the last quarter of the century come five anonymous verse legends, all of them, as I have said, of marked value. In 1375, as we know from his own statement in an epilogue, an East Midland poet gave the story of *Adam and Eve* a new form. The version in rhymed couplets, made about a century earlier, was a simple and not

wholly unsuccessful narrative, but this new translation is greatly superior to it both in management of events and of verse. Through two hundred tail-rhyme stanzas the poet so frames events, so phrases both dialogue and description, that the reader is held unwearied. This strophic *Canticum de Creatione*, as it is called in the unique manuscript, was based for the most part on the same materials as the earlier *Adam and Eve*, but includes also a brief outline of the history of the cross-wood. It is, of course, an entirely independent rendering of the Latin sources.

Even more interesting are two legends in the well-known Thornton MS., a miscellany collected and transcribed by Robert Thornton, a Yorkshireman, who became archdeacon of Bedford and who died in 1450. The saints' lives that he found worthy of inclusion in his volume were both written in the North: a *Christopher* and a *John the Evangelist*. The former, of which an extensive section has been lost with certain leaves of the manuscript, must once have been a poem of very considerable length. In its mutilated state, indeed, it runs to more than a thousand lines. It is on the scale of the romances, which it resembles in many ways. The metre is the familiar rhymed couplet, but of a particularly easy and fluent execution. For the treatment of the legend that the poet gives, the verse was singularly well adapted. He had, moreover, the power of visualizing the important scenes of the story and of making the reader feel, accordingly, the dignity and pathos of the giant Christopher's search for the Lord of the World and of his humble

service to Christ. It is the later legend of the saint, of course, that is recounted: concerning the paynim Christopher, who would have as master only the mightiest, and who was rewarded, before he met martyrdom, by the privilege of carrying his Lord across the turbulent estuary. Our northern poet rose to the height of the occasion in describing that scene, but elsewhere also he gave the beautiful legend a worthy dress. He was not a maker of phrases; he plunged straight on with his narrative; he had, in short, the manner of the ablest romancers who wrote for a popular hearing. Yet the tone was a proper one for legend-writing, and the superscription of the manuscript is just: "to the heryng or the redyng of the whilke storye langes grete mede, and it be done with devocione."

The *John the Evangelist* is a poem more ambitious than the *Christopher* in form, but quite as successful. It is written in a curious metre that combines alliterative lines into elaborate stanzas by means of rhyme: a difficult device much used, and rather delightfully at times, by northern poets. In *John the Evangelist*, certainly, the complication of the stanzas does not hamper expression or lead to mere ingenuity of handling. The poem is a series of invocations to St. John, and to that extent lyrical; but it rehearses the chief events of his life as given in the New Testament and in apocryphal writings. There is great tenderness of feeling in the delineation of the saint's care for Christ's Mother, an exquisiteness that stamps the work as the production of a poet who was

capable of the finer shades of human emotion. Withal, the love of color and the richness of vocabulary, so characteristic of the school by which alliterative verse was revived in the fourteenth century, give the poem imaginative appeal. It is a misfortune that we do not know the poet's name, for he was akin to the equally unknown author of the *Pearl*, though inferior to that great artist in his gifts.

Another anonymous legend of the period, however, has sometimes been ascribed to the *Pearl* poet, and is quite worthy of him. Unfortunately, we have no evidence save similarity of language by which to connect *Erkenwald* with either the *Pearl* or *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*. That it was a production of the same school, however, there is no manner of doubt: it was written in the Northwestern Midlands and in a style that reminds one at every turn of the allegorical elegy and the romance. The treatment of the subject, withal, shows the same imaginative daring, the same boldness of conception. *Erkenwald* is not a life of the saint, who died as Bishop of London in 692–94, but the story of an incident during his bishopric. While St. Paul's was rebuilding, it runs, there was found a rich tomb containing the body of a man clothed in royal robes and crowned. The corpse was undecayed, with the garments upon it as fresh as on the day of burial. When St. Erkenwald was summoned to witness the miracle, he commanded the man, in the name of Christ, to tell who he was and what was his state. Then the body spoke, relating that he had been magis-

trate in "the new Troy" more than a thousand years before Christ, during the reign of Sir Belyne; that he had lived righteously; but that Christ's mercy had not been extended to him when He harrowed Hell. So moved was Erkenwald by this recital that tears dropped from his eyes; and, while he spoke the words of baptism, one tear fell upon the face of the corpse. Whereupon, the man gave thanks that his time of waiting was at an end, "for the words thou speakest and thy tears, the bright stream from thy eyes, have become my baptism." And the corpse with its gorgeous vestments fell into sudden decay. This miracle is found, as far as I can discover, in none of the accounts of the saint, though many wonders are attributed to him. Possibly our poet may have found the story in the "crafty cronecles" of which he speaks, or he may have taken his materials from a tradition of the Welsh marches. At all events, his three hundred and fifty-two unrhymed alliterative lines owed much to his own imagination. They have the charm of color and sound and movement that goes with romantic poetry, and a restraint of mood by which the sensuous appeal is moulded into beauty. It is a rare thing to find a saintly miracle so sweetly and yet so powerfully told. Despite the difficulties presented by its unfamiliar speech, the poem should not lie perdu, as it has done, to lovers of English poetry and of ecclesiastical lore.

A legend that scarcely falls within the limits of the type, yet must still be there classed, is the poem diversely known as *Susanna* and *The Pistel of Swete Susan.* In

content it is simply the story of the adventure of Susanna with the elders; but so bedecked with poetic description, after the manner of the school of writers who used the revived alliterative verse, as to be almost wholly a work of the author's imagination. Concerning its authorship and provenience Middle English scholars have at times been greatly agitated, and with good reason. Because of a reference in Wyntoun's *Chronicle of Scotland* it has been ascribed to a poet named Huchown, who has further been identified with Sir Hugh of Eglinton. The dialect of the manuscript is scarcely that of fourteenth century Scotland, which makes the second conjecture most hazardous and raises doubts about the first. A discussion of the question would here be out of place. It is enough to record that not long before the last quarter of the century began, or perhaps somewhat later, a northern poet of considerable gifts related the popular story of *Susanna* with an elaboration of stanzaic form that rivalled the elaboration of setting.

Chaucer himself made but a single excursion in legend-writing, although the Monk of *The Canterbury Tales* is represented as prepared to "seyn the lyf of seint Edward," and the Man of Law refers to *The Legend of Good Women* as the "Seintes Legende of Cupide." The *Man of Law's Tale* in one way, indeed, and the *Prioress's Tale* in another, approximate the type; but the story of Constance is, after all, a romance, and the tale of the "litel clergeoun" an *exemplum*. What is of importance to us with reference to these two stories is that they show Chaucer

capable of understanding the spirit in which legends ought to be written. This he showed again, and more fully, in the life of *St. Cecilia*, which he ascribed to the Second Nun.

The date of *St. Cecilia*, like many another vexing question of Chaucerian chronology, has been the subject of much inquiry of late years. That the tale was not, in the first instance, written for the Second Nun is proved by a reference in the prologue to the narrator as an "unworthy sone of Eve," and by the appeal at the end to "yow that reden that I wryte." That it was written before *The Legend of Good Women*, which is ascribed to 1385 or 1386, we know also, for it is mentioned in the prologue of that work. The date that has been customarily assigned to the poem, however, is 1373–4, though Professor Kittredge has recently remarked that this "seems on the whole a little too early." The tendency has been to place it as soon as possible after Chaucer's return from his first Italian mission in 1373. Quite lately Professor Carleton Brown has advanced the ingenious argument that the stanzas of the prologue which Chaucer imitated from Dante's *Paradiso*, eking out lines with recollected phrases from hymns, were inserted after the prologue was first written. Unfortunately, though Professor Brown shows that the stanzas in question — an invocation to the Virgin — are an elaborate mosaic of phrases that had stuck in the poet's memory, he presents no evidence that the passage is an insertion at all, which is the crucial point. That it may have been is wholly an

assumption, based on the fact that the prologue runs smoothly enough if the stanzas be left out, and on the feeling that they are better poetry than the rest — that they are an anachronism as they are now placed. Such contentions repose so much on personal taste, it need scarcely be said, that they have no validity in settling a prosaic question of date. In point of fact, the early date assigned the *St. Cecilia* as a whole rests entirely on impressionistic criticism: on the assumption that Chaucer would not have written it after he reached full maturity. Into this matter we must, after a moment, inquire; but we may safely assert that such arguments do not prove when the poem was written. That Chaucer made it before *The Legend of Good Women* we know; that it may be dated after 1373 we surmise; beyond that we have to confess our ignorance.

Upon what version of the *Acta S. Cæciliæ* the poet based his story we are equally in doubt. The studies of Kölbing and Professor Holthausen, however, have made clear at least three points. Chaucer did not use Jean de Vignay's translation of the *Legenda Aurea*, as was formerly said; he must have had before him a Latin text greatly resembling that translated into Greek by Simeon Metaphrastes; and he must have rendered his original into English with remarkable fidelity. It is quite possible that a properly directed study of the Latin versions may yet reveal the form that Chaucer knew.

The faithfulness of his translation is a matter of considerable importance. Scholars wiser in Chaucerian than

in saintly lore — wiser, too, I fear, in textual criticism than in humanity — have not scrupled to rate the poet soundly for showing so little originality in his *Cecilia*. "Skill in combining materials," says one who excepts the beautiful invocation, "is just what is conspicuously absent." Yes: he did not combine; he changed the legend as slightly as possible, as far as one can see; he was true to his statements at the opening of the poem.

> I have heer doon my feithful bisinesse,
> After the legende, in translacioun,

and again: —

> For both have I the wordes and sentence
> Of him that at the seintes reverence
> The storie wroot, and folwe hir legende,
> And prey yow, that ye wol my werk amende.

To the penetrating criticism of Professor Root that Chaucer's "deliberate choice of theme, not in the first place for the Second Nun, but for himself, is a valuable piece of testimony as to his deeper and more serious life," it might be added that his treatment of the theme "at the seintes reverence" is equally a revelation of the great poet's inner self. The religious tone of his legend is as admirable as is its technical execution.

Chaucer's achievement in writing the *Cecilia* is the greater, to my mind, that he was not forced to falsify his original in order to get the poetical effects he attained. He seems, from motives that do him great credit, to have been more chary about letting his imagination play with

the story than were most mediæval legend-writers; and yet he succeeded in giving to it a form as remarkable for its beauty as for its human appeal. Keeping "wordes and sentence," he nevertheless made the figure of the saint as vivid against the background of miracle as are all the personalities in his maturer work. The virgin's holiness shines through the limpid flow of the poet's favorite stanzas — he wrote in the rhyme royal; yet her humanity is not obscured. Nothing but the most rigorous sobriety and simplicity of execution could have given this quality to the work. Not only Cecilia but her husband Valerian and his brother Tiburce, who precede her to martyrdom, are pictured with a solid mastery that is unusual in legend-writing.

It is aptness of phrase, perhaps, careful adapting of metrical expression to the required mood, that achieves this result; but these things are the basis of great poetry. Unless Chaucer had before him a Latin text much more felicitous than any I have seen, the charm of his legend is due in very large measure to his own genius. This he accomplished, moreover, be it remembered, without unfaithfulness of rendering. The only liberty that he seems to have permitted himself was to hurry on from the conversion of the two brothers to their martyrdom. The instinct of the born story-teller would have urged him to this course, which in no way changed the legend though it brought the leading characters into sharper relief. The difference between his treatment and other forms of the life is the difference between portraits of the same person

by a great painter and by his less richly gifted contemporaries. While writing his prologue, where he could express freely his own meditations, Chaucer's mind must have been swept by a flood of recollected phrases and images, out of which he made the beautiful mosaic that fittingly introduces the legend. If the sober reverence of treatment throughout the poem be remembered, it is small wonder that he fitted an invocation to the Virgin into the prologue; small wonder, too, that the poetic level of his verse rose to the height of the religious emotion he was expressing. What he made was not a patchwork of phrases from Dante and the hymn-writers, nor is the credit for its loveliness due to them. It is Chaucer's prayer, forged by his brain from some of the loftiest utterances of Christian faith; Chaucer's prayer as certainly as if he had newly minted each phrase and word that it contains.

A saint's life from the very end of the fourteenth century aptly illustrates the changed conditions of legend-writing that came about with the final adoption of English as the natural medium of expression both for the high-born and for men of low estate. It was written by a squire of a great lord, who thus whiled away the tedium of an imprisonment into which he had voluntarily followed his master. By a fortunate chance, the author gave his name and the circumstances in which he made his legend. He was called William Paris, and he was the sole attendant remaining to Thomas de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, exiled to the Isle of Man in 1397 by Richard II.

Very seldom in the history of mediæval literature is such accuracy of statement possible.

The saint whose life the faithful squire chose as the solace of his hours of idleness was Christina. The legend of *Christina* had already been included in one of the expanded versions of the *North-English Homily Collection;* it was selected for translation by the author of the *Scottish Legend Collection* at about William Paris's time; and it was to be the subject of a poem by Osbern Bokenam towards the middle of the next century. These four translations, however, were entirely independent of one another, and based, I think, on different Latin texts. Although it is possible that the *passio* used by William Paris perished on the Isle of Man, it seems likely that a form very similar to it may still be in existence. There is something more than a possibility, indeed, that a still inedited manuscript of the Vatican Library (B.H.L. no. 1748a) may enable us to discover with how much accuracy Warwick's attendant followed his source. Even without clearer knowledge of his original, however, we can see that the achievement of William Paris was in some ways remarkable. He was not a great poet, to be sure; as far as we know, this may have been his only essay in verse, and it showed no extraordinary gifts. Yet it is in every respect a more accomplished and pleasing translation of the legend than the other three that I have mentioned. More than that, it has a charm of movement and phrase distinctly reminiscent of Chaucer's *Cecilia*. There is no way of proving, of course,

that William Paris knew Chaucer's legend and used it as a model, but there is every probability that a bookish young man at the court of Richard II would have read the *Second Nun's Tale* and would have remembered it when he sat down to write. Except on the supposition that such was the case, it is difficult to understand how the *Christina* happens to show the qualities that give it distinction. William Paris did not ape Chaucer's phrases or refashion his story on the basis of Chaucer's narrative art; but the treatment of his eight-line stanza and the quality of his diction recall at every turn the master's handling. It was his misfortune that he chose a saint's life less capable of artistic treatment than St. Cecilia's, yet it must be said that he made of the rather stereotyped martyrdom a poem of unexpected interest. Since William Paris and his legend are almost unknown, I quote two stanzas by way of illustration. The first is self-explanatory, while the second concerns the misfortunes of Thomas de Beauchamp.

Thus some have grace or thei borne be,
As had the Baptiste, goode Seint Johne,
And somme in tendre age, parde,
As Cristyne had, that faire womane;
And some in elde when youghte is gone,
As in Poules lyfe we may see;
And some whene thei shall die anone,
As Barabas thefe, that honge so hye.

. . . . . .

Where are his knyghtis that with hyme yede
Whane he was in prosperite?
Where are the squiers now at nede

That sumetyme thoughte thei wold not flee?
Of yomene hade he grete plente
Thate he was wonte to cloth and feede:
Nowe is ther none of the mene
Thate ons dare se ther lorde fore drede.

At about the time when William Paris was writing his poem, the anonymous author of the *Scottish Legend Collection* was translating his series of saints' lives beyond the border; and only a little later in Shropshire, John Mirk compiled his *Festial* for the use of parish priests. The significance of the latter work, which was discussed in the chapter preceding this, can in some respects be better appreciated after our review of the course that legends ran during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was in prose; and the reader will note that from the closing years of the twelfth century until the very end of Chaucer's life no prose legend is of record. With the turn of the fifteenth century, however, the practice of making translations in English prose revived, which can mean nothing else than that the circle of persons who wished to read, as well as to hear read, the lives of saints had been greatly widened. During the fifteenth century, as a matter of fact, almost as many legends were written in prose as in verse. Before considering them, however, it will perhaps be better first to follow the current of the poetical lives until, with the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses in 1455, the composition of them virtually ceased. The prose legends spanned the century, which was to witness at its end so marked a change of conditions in

literary production that the *débâcle* of the Reformation cannot be said to have come without warning.

At the beginning of the century was made a translation in rhyming couplets of the Latin prose *Visio Tnugdali* that won a considerable success, although it was without much merit. The *Vision of Tundale* was an imitation of earlier visions such as the *Purgatory of St. Patrick* and the *Vision of Paul*, but it was less well organized and more repetitious even in its best versions. As in the *Purgatory*, the scene of the story is Ireland, and striking details like the Bridge of Souls are taken over with little variation from the earlier work. The chief difference lies in the fact that the hero is wicked and suffers purgatorial torments as a warning. Tundale is represented as an Irish knight of the mid-twelfth century. The English version, which is a poem of more than two thousand lines, was made in the North and followed the Latin original with unimaginative fidelity.

In the North, also, and early in the century, was compiled a life of *St. Cuthbert* in verse, the first, save the *St. Erkenwald*, of a series of local legends that was to be a marked feature of the new period of complete national consciousness. The *St. Cuthbert* is an ambitious work in four books, and runs to nearly eight thousand five hundred lines; but it has no interest except as showing the current of the times. It is, indeed, a most tedious example of prolix verse-making. The author was a rude craftsman, with no better control of the tail-rhyme stanzas by which he tried to vary the monotony of his poem

than of the short rhyming couplets in which he wrote the greater part of it. He made from his materials neither picturesque narrative, nor sober history of the early Anglian Church, nor yet sympathetic biography. For the most part, he drew upon well-known Latin works for his information, and otherwise preserved little that is valuable. His ponderous work is, in brief, a mechanical compilation without the merits of popular poetry or of consciously artistic narrative.

Vastly more interesting and valuable in every respect is the little known life of an obscure thirteenth century hermit which was written in Yorkshire at about the same time. Of *St. Robert of Knaresborough*, who was thus celebrated, almost nothing is known save from the unique manuscript of the English poetical life. This manuscript seems to have come from the house of the Trinitarian or Maturine Friars at Knaresborough, which was on the foundation of grants made to St. Robert during his lifetime. Aside from the English legend, it contains a life in Latin verse and one in Latin prose. Both of the latter are still inedited, while the English poem is accessible only in a text published in 1824. A modern edition of the entire manuscript is much to be desired, for the English portion of it has great interest as a linguistic document, while the hagiographical and antiquarian value of the whole can hardly be over-estimated. The history of the order of the Trinitarian Friars, for one thing, is singularly obscure, although an account of their operations for the redemption of captives among Jews and Saracens

would be one of the most romantic chapters of mediæval history.

The English *Life of St. Robert* seems to have been written by the head of the Trinitarian house at Knaresborough, —

> That I, all yff I simple be,
> Occupyes als presidentt.

He wrote, in such unadorned couplets as that just quoted, an account both of Robert's life and of the foundation of his house. Because his work is known to so few I transcribe his opening lines: —

> Then frendes fares well at a fest
> And glewmen gladdes tham wit gest,
> Of harpyng som has lyst to here
> And som of carpyng of tales sere;
> Of Arthure, Ector, and Achilles,
> Princes that wer proude in prese,
> Of kynges and kempes, of conquerours,
> Of lords, of ladies, of paramours,
> That ar bott vaine and vanite.
> Of slyke sall noght my carpyng be,
> Bott of a better, he me haste,
> Fadir and son and halygaste.

It will be seen that the author was not greatly accomplished, but also that he had the gift of fluent verse. Indeed, the homely simplicity which he combined with reverence make his rapidly moving narrative interesting of itself, as it would be, in any case, from the nature of his material.

St. Robert's career was picturesque in its variety and its contrasts. Like Francis of Assisi, who was almost

exactly his contemporary, he was of good birth. After taking sub-deacon's orders, he left York with his page and remained for some months at Newminster Abbey. He then returned to his birthplace, but soon joined a hermit (who had been a knight) at Knaresborough. Thence he was driven by thieves, but after remaining for some time at Spofford and at Hedley Abbey he returned to take up his residence definitely at the place with which his name is associated. Neither the persecutions of two lords nor the entreaties of his brother — then mayor of York — could dislodge him. From them, as well as from King John, who visited him, he obtained gifts that established him at the head of a little community. So great was his reputation at the time of his death that the monks of Fountains Abbey tried to obtain his body and were driven away by the men of Knaresborough in force. Along with much interesting detail, this is the story of his life, which deserves to be better known.

Probably in the North also was made, at this time, a new version of *St. Alexis* in rhymed couplets, the sixth and last of the Middle English poetical treatments of the theme. Like the two northern versions of a century earlier, it was written for the pleasure of unlearned men; and its only virtue is its appeal by homely pictures to their sense of dramatic contrasts. In his description of the marriage-feast the poet indulged his fancy as the makers of popular romances were wont to do, and

> Every man had there plente
> Of claret wyne and pymente.

There is, moreover, the swift movement characteristic of all the better specimens among tales designed for the common people. This is the shortest rendering of *St. Alexis*, and not the least interesting.

Still another legend that received a new dress in the early part of the century was *Theophilus*. It had already been adapted for both the *South-English Legendary* and the *North-English Homily Collection;* but this later independent rendering has points of interest that the earlier ones do not possess. Like the thirteenth century *Harrowing of Hell* and the fourteenth century *Celestin*, it is semi-dramatic in form. Quite clearly, I think, it must either have been based on a miracle play or have been a conscious attempt at dramatic form. The story is told almost wholly by dialogue and soliloquy; and in many places the connecting tissue of narrative is entirely omitted, so that speech follows speech without interruption. It is hardly possible in the circumstances to decide why the dramatic element should have been so emphasized: either of the two possibilities mentioned above may be the true explanation. The poem cannot be classed as a play, I think, but it is an important witness to the rising popularity of drama at the time — the age, it will be remembered, when the miracle cycles were taking shape. This *Theophilus* is written in six-line tail-rhyme stanzas, terse and bold of phrasing, though sufficiently crude. The traffic of the clerk Theophilus with the Devil for the sake of position and riches was a subject of as absorbing interest to the Middle Ages as was the evil ambition of Faustus to the

Renaissance; and it lent itself early to dramatic presentation. Especially vivid in the poem we are considering is the scene where Theophilus reads the charter by which he gives his soul to Satanas. To its generation and to its proper audience it must have furnished the thrill that Marlowe so magnificently provided for a later day. The intervention of the Virgin at the end weakens the tragic significance of the story, as always, but it gives a melodramatic *dénoûment* less incongruous than Goethe's philosophical solution of the *Faust* story. Our fifteenth century *Theophilus* deserves greater fame than it has hitherto enjoyed, not as a finished product of art, but as one link in a long chain of legends. Unfortunately the mixture of dialect in the unique manuscript of the work prevents us from knowing in what part of England it was composed.

Also mixed in dialect is another poem of the early fifteenth century which must, like *Theophilus*, be classed as a legend though it is not the life of a saint. The story of *Robert of Sicily*, the proud king on whose throne God placed an angel till he had learned humility as a beggar, is not unknown to modern readers. The fifteenth century version in rhymed couplets, though unpretentious and perfectly commonplace, seems to have enjoyed a considerable popularity. Probably any rendering of a theme so well designed to flatter the imagination of the populace would have found equal favor, no matter what its qualities.

Before passing to a consideration of more important works, I must mention the fact that a new version of *The Trental of St. Gregory* was made in the fifteenth cen-

tury — and probably in the first decades of it. The work has no importance, however, save as showing that the legend persisted in popular favor, for it is no less despicable than the version from the previous century already described. One can only say that the story deserved no better dress than the rude couplets in which it is clumsily arrayed.

Interesting among the legend-writers of the time whose names we know, was John Audelay. He was not, to be sure, a poet of any remarkable natural gifts or technical skill. Indeed, his work was frequently clumsy and rough. Yet for the spirit that animates his poems, a spirit compounded of humility and true reverence, he is memorable among the religious writers of his century. Moreover, something of lyrical grace and something of narrative vigor save his verse from the lower circles of dulness. Whether in legends, in hymns of invocation to the saints, or in his gruesome moral tale *De tribus Regibus Mortuis*, he has a note of his own and an imagination that outruns his power of expression.

The little we know about Audelay is due to his own references to himself. No less than seventeen times he set down his name, frequently with the addition that he was blind, or blind and deaf. He was, we learn, a chaplain at Haghmon Abbey, a house of Augustinian Canons near Shrewsbury; and he himself says that he was the first priest of the chantry of Lord Strange at Haghmon. He must, it would appear, have written most of his verse about the year 1426, and he must have died about 1430.

Further than this we have no information about his career; we know only that he was a pious and humble soul who was impelled by a vision to write, and that he considered the Lollards enemies of God.

The first legend that he composed seems to have been a rendering of the *Vision of Paul*, very similar in content to the version of the mid-fourteenth century and based on the same Latin original. It is, however, very different in manner from the earlier work which it so much resembles in content. John Audelay had the passion for elaborately interlaced rhymes that was characteristic of the generations following Chaucer, and he wrote his vision of the torments of Hell in twenty-eight stanzas of thirteen lines apiece, a form too difficult for him to manage satisfactorily.

Far more interesting and important is Audelay's *Salutation to Saint Bridget*, which is in reality a brief life of the sainted Swedish princess, though formally an invocation. The poet's devotion to her was natural, since he was a member of an Augustinian house and Bridget had chosen the rule of St. Austin for her great monastery in Sweden. He describes the foundation by Henry V of Sion House, which took place in 1413, forty years after the saint's death. This was the only important Brigettine establishment in England. He adds a prayer "for young King Harry" the Sixth. It is noteworthy that this life of St. Bridget followed so soon on her canonization, which took place in 1391. There is no other case of the sort in the entire history of the English vernacular legends, the

only instance approximating it being that of St. Guthlac in the eighth century. The *Salutation of St. Bridget*, which has never yet been printed, is a poem of twenty-three nine-line stanzas.

More accomplished as a piece of versification is Audelay's third legend, a life of *St. Wenefred* in thirty four-line stanzas. The greater success of this piece is not to be ascribed, however, to any simplification of structure, since the poet ingeniously used the same rhyme for the fourth line of every stanza throughout the poem. In spite of the difficulties that he thus created for himself, he was not unsuccessful in compressing the chief points of the *Wenefred* legend into short compass. No doubt his special interest in the saint was due to the proximity of Haghmon Abbey to Holywell, where Wenefred was supposed to have been beheaded and miraculously restored to life. In Audelay's time pilgrims resorted thither in vast numbers, attracted by the spring which was said to mark the spot. *St. Wenefred*, which the author curiously termed a "carol," has not yet been edited.

We have now to consider the most celebrated legend-writer of the fifteenth century, John Lydgate, who was, as well, its most popular poet in other *genres*. With the Benedictine house of Bury St. Edmunds, of which he was a member, his name is inseparably connected. His literary career began long before that of Audelay and extended well beyond it, for he was born about 1370 and did not die until after 1446, as we know from a document of that year. An industrious writer, he was perhaps more

nearly a professional poet, in the modern sense, than anyone else who used the English tongue before the invention of printing. Even Chaucer, who can truthfully be called the "father of English poetry" in this sense at least, was less exclusively dependent on his art for livelihood and favor. During his long activity Lydgate composed, so Professor Schick has reckoned, more than one hundred and thirty thousand lines: a calculation that still leaves out of account everything save his major works. He could have had time and vigor, one must suppose, for little else than his poetry; and, indeed, there is no evidence that he was in any way prominent except as a poet, though he received a full measure of renown at the hands of his contemporaries.

The record of his life, as far as outward events are concerned, is very slight. Quite possibly, however, we know all the essential facts and should gain little by discovering that he was in this place or that, in a particular year. What we need for an understanding of his career is a more exact chronology of his works rather than completer annals of his life. He was born, so he tells us, at Lydgate, near Newmarket, and he seems to have been placed in the great abbey of Bury St. Edmunds when he was about fifteen years old. According to tradition, he studied at Oxford also, but there is no proof of it. At all events, he took the four minor orders of the Church in 1389, and was ordained priest in 1397. In 1423 he was elected prior of Hatfield Broadoke, otherwise Hatfield Regis. How successfully he discharged the duties of his office there

we are not informed, although we are permitted to feel some doubts in view of the fact that in 1434 he received permission to return to Bury "propter frugem melioris vitae captandam." Meanwhile, he was in Paris in 1426 or thereabouts, for what purpose or for how long we do not know. As late as 1445 he was making verses for the pageants that celebrated the entry of Queen Margaret into London, and about a year later was mentioned as living, by an admirer who sang his praises loudly. A record of the payment of a pension in 1446 is the last explicit reference to him that has been discovered. From the subsequent silence his death not long after is to be conjectured.

Lydgate's work was divided, as Professor Schick has suggested, into two periods: that done before 1412, and the quite extraordinary amount of verse that he wrote after that date. This arrangement helps one understand his career, if it be considered as a whole. Undoubtedly the longer poems written before Lydgate was fifty have not the fluent dulness of his later translations. Yet with regard to his saints' lives there is little to be learned from such an analysis. Of the ten legends that he wrote, not including for the moment a poetical *Calendar*, only one can be dated before 1412; and little or no difference in manner can be detected, I think, between the earlier and the later works. It is not even important that he should have composed the greater number of his legends when he was past middle life, for most of them were done by command, which testifies merely to his renown.

Nevertheless, we must not fail to note that his most important contribution to hagiography, *The Life of Our Lady*, was written between 1409 and 1411. Professor Schick has established the date beyond reasonable doubt. This poem is a work of nearly six thousand lines, in rhyme royal — Chaucer's stanza, it will be remembered — and is divided into four books. In scope it is the completest life of the Virgin that has ever been made in English verse, embracing not only the story of the Gospels but also the apocryphal accounts of Mary's life and death. The sources upon which Lydgate drew for his material have not yet been carefully studied, and cannot well be until the long-promised edition by Dr. Fiedler is issued. But it is not for out-of-the-way stories that one would turn to the book; it is, rather, for the fluent grace with which the poet has treated an old theme. Whatever opinions one may hold with regard to Lydgate's talent, it is undeniable that he possessed in a marked degree two qualities very necessary to success in the writing of saints' lives. He showed, all his critics admit, a humility which cannot be explained as mere conventional self-depreciation; and he was truly reverential of spirit. These characteristics are everywhere apparent in *The Life of Our Lady* and give it a tone of genuine devotion. Arid it is, at times, for Lydgate was uneven in execution and lacked the imaginative grasp of the great masters of verse; but as a whole it is a noble treatment of its subject and worthy of remembrance. Our Benedictine monk's dulness is often the result, I believe,

of not too deep-seated learning, which betrayed him into pedantic silliness. Fluency alone does not account for his pages of unilluminated rhyme. In *The Life of Our Lady*, fortunately, his vein of folly was checked by his religious feeling; he responded to the inspiration of a subject that was to him a matter of sincerest concern. *The Life of Our Lady* is not so well known to modern students as are Lydgate's other major works, but largely because it has not been readily accessible. Its early popularity is attested by the number of manuscript copies that were made of it — nearly forty are known to be extant — as well as by the early prints of Caxton and Redman; and its popularity was deserved.

No legend from Lydgate's pen, save the one just discussed, can be dated earlier than 1426. Indeed, as to the date of *St. George*, which comes next in the list, we have no clue except that it must have been made, as Miss Hammond has shown, after that year. One can say of it without scruple and with entire justice that its sole interest lies in the fact of its existence. It does nothing more than rehearse in thirty stanzas (again rhyme royal) the commonplaces of the later legend of St. George. It was, however, written for the Armorers of London to be "the devyse of a steyned halle," in the words of a contemporary copyist; and by reason of this purpose it takes on a value in archæology that it does not possess as literature. Just how such poems were used we do not yet know, for it is difficult to understand how two or three hundred lines of verse could be woven into tapestry or

painted as descriptive comment upon pictures. Yet Lydgate composed this legend, we are told on excellent authority, "at the request of tharmorieres of Londonn for thonour of theyre brotherhoode and theyre feest of saint George." Moreover, Lydgate on at least three other occasions made verses to accompany pictorial decorations. The wonder is that so feeble and undramatic a work as this legend could have been used in such a way.

The passion of *St. Margaret*, which had already inspired native legend-writers — once with notable success — furnished Lydgate a subject perhaps more congenial to his taste than England's patron saint. At all events, he made of it a poem so good that it ranks among his best, and among the best legends of the fifteenth century. He used rhyme royal, as in most of his legends, varying the metrical scheme by appending a *ballade*. Unaffected, unpretentious, and wholly undramatic, the seventy-seven stanzas are perfectly in keeping with the matter of the story. They ape no other *genre*, and they strain for no quality that is not theirs by what seems natural right. Lydgate often blundered, but sometimes, when he dealt with a theme requiring no sharp contrasts but much sweetness, he exhibited great literary tact. There is almost nothing in *St. Margaret* that one could wish to have away, and there is a good deal of genuine beauty. As always, Lydgate suffers from seeming more modern than he is: a careless reading is likely to make one think his work easy to understand but poetically crude. In the *St. Margaret*, as elsewhere, our taste cannot well approve

his special fondness for rhyming words of Latin or Romance derivation; but in other respects there is little to find fault with in the technique of his verse. He himself speaks of "compiling" St. Margaret for Lady March, yet he seems not to have gone far afield for his material. The poem was based on the epitome of the saint's life in *Legenda Aurea*, and was merely a free rendering of that text. According to the statement of a scribe whom we have no reason to doubt, it was made in the eighth year of Henry VI, that is, between August 31, 1429, and August 31, 1430.

In the same year Lydgate wrote a brief poem for a Christmas mumming before the King at Windsor: for the Christmas festivities of 1429–30. It relates an incident from the legend of *St. Clotilda*, and is undistinguished save in the circumstances of its production.

About three years later, as we know from a reference to a visit of Henry VI to Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate was commissioned by Abbot William to make a life of the East Anglian king and martyr to whom the monastery was dedicated. This work, which he thus began in 1433, must have been to Lydgate the occasion of much pride. It was addressed to the King and, when completed, was presented to him in a beautiful copy that is still preserved. Possibly to the humble poet's nervous dread in the expectation of so august a reader may be attributed some of the faults of the *St. Edmund*. In contrast with the *St. Margaret*, it parades a show of learning that not only re-

tards the progress of the narrative but frequently becomes ridiculous. Although Lydgate says: —

> In Tullius gardeyn I gadrid never floures,
> Nor never slepte upon Citheroun,

he embellished his story with every device within his power. But his sententious comments are clumsy, his learned allusions dull, his rhetoric is stilted. The good qualities which he shows elsewhere are so buried in verbiage that the three books of the poem stretch themselves out wearily, in spite of an occasional graceful turn. The unwieldly bulk of the legend is swollen, moreover, by the fact that the third book is devoted to St. Edmund's cousin, Fremund. This device of amplification may have been pleasing to the royal patron, but it does not add to the structural excellence of the work. Again rhyme royal was employed, but for the most part with the fluent flatness that was the poet's bane. His better style is shown in the final address to the king.

> Sovereyn lord, plese to your goodlyheed
> And to your gracious royal magnyficence
> To take this tretys, which a-twen hope and dreed
> Presentyd ys to your hyh excellence.
> And for kyng Edmundis notable reverence
> Beth to his chyrche dyffence and champioun,
> Be-cause yt ys off your fundacioun.

Even longer than the *St. Edmund* is the life of *St. Alban* that Lydgate made in 1439, and even less successful. Again he was writing a double legend, for he followed the common tradition in joining the story of the shadowy

Amphibalus to the passion of England's proto-martyr. To Alban he devoted two books and to Amphibalus a third — precisely the plan he had adopted for *St. Edmund.* This similarity of plan may help to account for the inferiority of the *St. Alban;* it may have led him into a duller prolixity. He could scarcely have felt, moreover, the same personal interest in St. Alban as in the patron of his own abbey. Certainly this work of more than four thousand seven hundred verses, in stanzas of seven and eight lines, never shows any depth of feeling and never rises to any beauty. It was made to order, and shows it.

In 1444, not long before his death, that is, Lydgate wrote the last of his legends that can be dated. It was composed as an appendix to *St. Edmund* and deals with the later miracles of the saint, two of them performed at Bury St. Edmunds itself in the very year when the verses were made. The *Miracles of St. Edmund,* however, has no value save as a document; Lydgate's poetical gift seems by this time to have deserted him utterly. His eight-line stanzas are strung together without art, and individually they have neither grace nor strength. Only from the fact that the miracles all concern rescues of little children have they much interest: it is a pleasingly sentimental reflection that among the last verses of the old monk were these, so sympathetic with childhood.

Of the undated legends, the most considerable are a *St. Giles* and a *St. Austin at Compton,* both of them in the eight-line stanza which Lydgate used for such purposes in alternation with rhyme royal. Neither poem has much

merit, although the second has some interest for the story of St. Augustine that it relates. It tells in summary fashion, but with the prolixity of introduction that was one of Lydgate's besetting sins, how the saint brought to terms a knight who refused to pay his tithes. "Dul and old" the poet calls himself in an *envoi;* and we may pass over the faults of the little treatise with the remark that it was an undistinguished work of pious senility. The *St. Giles* bears no evidence as to its date save its excessive pedantry. Although it was called a translation, it is embellished by a variety of conceits and allusions that suggest a hardening of the poet's manner into mechanical dexterity. It was made at the instance of some patron who is vaguely referred to as a "creature," and it is clumsy both in diction and in structure. On the showing of such a work, Lydgate would merit little consideration.

A *Procession of Corpus Christi* cannot strictly be termed a legend, for it is a running narrative of the testimony borne to the honor of the sacramental host from the earliest days to the time of Thomas Aquinas. Yet so closely similar is it in manner to Lydgate's saints' lives that it should be mentioned in connection with them. We have no clue as to its date; and we have not yet been informed whether it was based on any earlier treatise concerning the feast of Corpus Christi. Quite clearly it was intended to usher in some dramatic spectacle. It is brief, and comparatively simple and direct of phrasing, not unlike in these ways the better lyrical invocations and

prayers to the saints, more than a dozen of which are to be found among Lydgate's authentic works. Another brief legend, *St. Petronilla*, has been confidently assigned to the poet by Professor MacCracken in his ambitious *Lydgate Canon*. It may well be from his pen, and is certainly of his school. Further than this, in default of any external evidence, it is hardly safe to go with reference to a poem of no special worth that is but one hundred and sixty-four lines in length.

To this list of Lydgate's legends is to be added a *Calendar* of holy-days throughout the year. Nothing of the sort had been attempted in English verse, so far as we know, since the Norman Conquest. The work has no merit as verse, but it furnishes a curious and not uninteresting list of saints. Made, as the scribe of one manuscript puts it, "after the forme of a compote manuelle," it gives an accurate notion of what days were kept in a great monastery like Bury St. Edmunds; and, like some of the earlier menologies, it characterizes many of the saints by at least a phrase. Nevertheless, Lydgate had not the art of condensed statement at his command. A less fluent man of letters might have made a calendar at once more inclusive and more informing.

During the latter part of Lydgate's life, Osbern Bokenam, whose collection of legends of women saints was discussed in the chapter preceding this, was doing his work as a humble follower of the renowned Benedictine monk. Bokenam, in his acknowledgment of literary obligations, mentions along with Lydgate John Capgrave,

an Austin friar like himself, but a far more prosperous and successful person.

> Myn cuntre is Northfolke, of the town of Lynne,

Capgrave says in the prologue of his most considerable verse legend; and in his *Chronicle of England* he informs us that he was born on April 21, 1394. It is not known where he got his education, but it can safely be assumed that he was under the direction of the Austin friars at Lynn from an early age. In 1416 or 1417 he was ordained priest, which means that he must have progressed by natural and uninterrupted stages to full orders. Moreover, he seems to have won recognition at once as a man of some gifts, for we find him preaching a series of sermons at Cambridge when he was thirty years old. Soon after 1422 he went to Rome and there fell ill, as we know from the dedicatory letter of one of his Latin works; but he has left us no information about his subsequent career. That he fulfilled the promise of his youth we cannot doubt, however. Two deeds of 1456 show that at that time he bore the titles of Prior and Provincial of his order. Since he was at Lynn some years before that date it would appear that he was Prior of the Augustinian house at that place, while his jurisdiction as Provincial extended at least as far as Oxford. He died in 1464.

From such scattering data as we possess we may infer that Capgrave had an active as well as successful life. There is no reason, moreover, for supposing that he was anything but an upright and high-minded man. The

inferences of some of his editors that he was a time-serving bigot are based on nothing except their dissent from his opinions. That he violently hated Wyclif and believed evil of Wyclif's followers cannot be regarded as a moral flaw unless one is going to demand impartial omniscience of all men; nor can it be imputed as a fault to a busy preaching friar that he did not refuse homage to Edward IV after having been a loyal subject of Henry VI. A consideration of what he accomplished shows that he must have been, indeed, a very busy non-political man.

In addition to performing his duties as preacher and executive officer, he wrote one considerable historical work in English and two in Latin; he compiled an English *Guide to the Antiquities of Rome;* he was the author of many theological treatises in Latin, most of which are not known to survive; he is credited with having revised a large collection of Latin lives of English saints, first assembled by John of Tynemouth and known to us as *Nova Legenda Angliæ,* though we have no certain knowledge about his connection with this undertaking; and he put together or translated at least five saints' lives of larger scope, four of them in English. In variety and in quantity, it will be seen, his literary production was somewhat remarkable for a man who did so many other things besides. That he had the highest talent cannot be asserted: it is rather as an industrious and intelligent worker on the borderlands between scholarship and literature that he deserves his measure of fame.

Of his four saints' lives in English, the first that he

wrote was *St. Catharine of Alexandria*. The date of this poem of epic length we do not know. It must have been written before 1440, when Capgrave finished (in Assumption week, he says) his *St. Norbert*, but how long before that time has not yet been determined. In any event, it must have been made when the author was in the full vigor of his active life; and it is representative both of his merits and of his weaknesses as a versifier. It is divided into five books, each of which is prefaced by a prologue of discursive and personal character, and it extends to more than eight thousand lines, all told. The metre is the familiar rhyme royal. *St. Norbert*, which is in the same stanza, is less than half as long as *St. Catharine*. The *St. Norbert*, unfortunately, has not yet been edited; and I must plead ignorance of its contents, save for a few specimen extracts. One cannot suppose, however, that it differs greatly in treatment from the earlier poem. Capgrave wrote it for John Wygnale, Abbot of West Dereham in Norfolk, a Premonstratensian house, for which a life of the founder of the order would naturally be in request.

What special purpose, if any, Capgrave had in writing the *St. Catharine* I do not know. In the prologue of the first book he tells a somewhat self-contradictory story about a priest named Arrek, from whose Latin version he pretends to have translated the work. Of Arrek we know nothing whatever, and are perhaps justified in feeling some doubts as to whether he was not a fictitious person, rather than the incumbent of St. Pancras' in London and a west-country man who died at Lynn. Certainly it is

hard to believe that he lived for twelve years in Alexandria in order to learn Greek and that he made a partial English translation of the legend as well as his Latin version. Capgrave must, I think, have been romancing, although it is scarcely safe to say so until a careful study has been made of his sources. The only thing one can be sure of at present is that his version was ultimately based on the pseudo-Athanasian *Life of Catharine*.

Until we know more about his sources, indeed, it is difficult to form an adequate estimate of Capgrave's performance as a whole. Yet it is clear that he must have treated his materials with a good deal of freedom, and that the work as it stands is Capgrave's own. That it is of tedious length no reader of it would deny. The most successful versions of the *Catharine* legend are those in which the harangues and arguments of the saint have been cut down; and more than half of Capgrave's fourth book is devoted to her debate with the philosophers. He had not the power of seizing the great moments of a story in epic fashion and subordinating unnecessary detail. On the other hand, the movement of events is straightforward and, in itself, good. The most interesting of the five books is certainly the third, which tells of the saint's conversion through the hermit Adrian, of her baptism, and of her mystic espousal by Christ. Here the tedium of the narrative is lifted into warmth and light: the dull plodding of the stanzas ceases for a time to distract the reader, as the glories of the Christian message are revealed to the high-born maiden. Capgrave was

never without metrical fluency and a personal style in verse that marks a degree of mastery. His tendency to run on the thought from stanza to stanza, often ending a sentence with the first or second line of the new stanza, helps to weave the narrative into consistency. Were it not that his facility leads him into prosiness, and that he often overloads his verse with learned references in the fashion of his day, he would be a poet in whom one could take real delight. Occasionally, by apt homely allusions or by descriptions such as that of Maxentius' gods in the fourth book, he recalls Chaucer. The pity is the greater that he never learned to curb his pen and to give the individual moments of his narrative higher intensity.

An account of Capgrave's two legends in prose may be deferred for a little until we have examined the few remaining saints' lives in verse that the century produced. First of them should be mentioned a *St. Dorothy*, which was the work either of Capgrave himself or of some writer who had been influenced by him and who was of his region. This *St. Dorothy*, a poem of three hundred and forty-four verses in eight-line stanzas, is known from two manuscripts, one of which (Arundel 168) contains also a copy of Capgrave's *Catharine*. It is not assigned to Capgrave by the scribes; but it recalls his work in style, and it has such of his linguistic peculiarities as can be certified by rhyme. On these accounts I am inclined, though hesitatingly, to believe that it should be attributed to him. However, it can neither make nor mar his reputation, for it is an undistinguished translation of the vulgate Latin

text published in the appendix of *Legenda Aurea*, and has no striking characteristics of any kind. In content it differs very slightly from Bokenam's verse translation of the same Latin text.

In another very brief legend of the period, an account in rhymed couplets of the martyrdom of *St. Erasmus*, with an *oratio* to the saint, can be traced the influence of Lydgate, though it is scarcely the work of Lydgate himself. Except as evidence that the martyred Bishop of Formiæ was reverenced in England at the time, a fact made clearer by the existence of our verse legend in two slightly different redactions, this *St. Erasmus* has no importance.

Later than this, from about the middle of the century onwards to the Reformation, only six saints' lives in verse were composed, so far as I know. To nothing else than the disturbances consequent upon the Wars of the Roses can I attribute this sudden cessation of activity in a field that had been so popular, though I am conscious that the explanation, in view of the fact that prose legends continued to be written, is not wholly adequate. Curiously enough, the six works to which I have alluded were all local legends. For this phenomenon I can see no reason: I can but set down the fact.

About the middle of the century was written *The Holy Blood of Hales*, which recounts how an unnamed Jew (Joseph of Arimathea, of course) preserved some of Christ's blood and was imprisoned with it till the coming of Titus and Vespasian. By them it was taken with other

relics to Rome, whence half of it was removed by Charlemagne to Treves. There it was found by Earl Edmund of Cornwall, whose father Richard was King of the Romans from 1257 to 1259, and a portion of it brought to England. In 1270 the earl gave it to the Abbey of Hales, or Hales-Owen, in Shropshire, a Premonstratensian house founded by King John. The writer testified that "plentious" miracles were still performed at the shrine in his day, and he avowedly wrote to combat the doubts that had been raised as to the authenticity of the relic. He told his story in one hundred quatrains with alternate rhymes, and he was wholly without poetical gifts. Nevertheless, the legend has considerable documentary value, for accounts of such shrines in mediæval England are all too few. Dr. Horstmann, who published the text, doubtfully ascribed it to the dialect of Cornwall, though for no reason that I can discover save that Edmund took his title from that county. Indeed, the legend seems to have been written in the West-Midland district, perhaps not far from Hales itself. That it was the work of a monk of that abbey cannot, however, be supposed, else the author would not refer to Hales as "there" instead of "here." He was, according to his own statement, translating from Latin: apparently from such a text as is to be found in an inedited manuscript of Trinity College, Cambridge (B.15. 30). How accurately he reproduced his original still awaits investigation.

Of even greater interest as a document than *The Holy Blood* is the double legend of *St. Wulfhad and St. Ruffin*,

which was made in Staffordshire at about the same time. It is in a clumsy adaptation of the alliterative metre, at times rhyming in pairs, and it makes no pretences to literary style. Its value consists simply in the fact that it was written or painted upon a "table," on the epistle side of the choir in the church at Stone Priory, a Carthusian house of some importance. It is known to us solely through one of the Cottonian manuscripts, and the beginning of it is almost illegible. By a curious chance, another inscription from the gospel side of the choir, which recounted the foundation of the monastery and named its benefactors down to the time of Henry IV, has also been preserved and can be read in Dugdale's *Monasticon*. The statement is there made that this second set of verses was hanging "in the Priorie of Stone, at the time of the Suppression of the same." Limitations of space do not permit me to give the evidence here; but these two inscriptions, by a double chance thus known to us, actually refer to one another and indisputably were the work of the same author. Whether they were hung in the choir itself or in the ambulatory is not clear to me, but it is certain that they were so placed as to be easily read by worshippers in the church. As the legend consists of three hundred and eighty-two lines, and the history of the foundation runs to one hundred and sixty-two, the tablets on which they were inscribed must have been of considerable size. Taken in connection with Lydgate's poems for pictorial decorations, they furnish evidence as to English fashions of mural display that is

very important. Indeed, the manner of their use at Stone Priory is much clearer than that of Lydgate's verses. The rhymed legend has, it should be added, no independent value for the lives of St. Wulfhad and St. Ruffin, since the author of it certainly had before him an ornate Latin *passio* that is still extant. The two saints were Mercian princes of the seventh century, brothers of St. Werburghe, converts of St. Chad, and martyrs for the faith.

Better known, at least to students of Middle English, than the legends just treated, are the lives of *St. Editha* and *St. Etheldreda* which have been thought to date from the beginning of the century. They were undoubtedly written in the dialect of Wiltshire; and quite possibly they were the work of the same author, since there are no appreciable linguistic differences between them and since the prolix manner of their compilation is similar. St. Editha was daughter of Edgar, King of Wessex in the second half of the tenth century, and won great repute for sanctity by her life as a nun at Wilton. The fifteenth century legend includes, in point of fact, not only her life and miracles, but a history of Wilton Priory and an account of the West Saxon kings from Egbert onwards. Considerations of space never troubled the author, who introduced, for example, the entire story of the German Dance of Death as preface to a recital of the healing of one of the dancers at the shrine of St. Edith. By such means he expanded his somewhat sprawling work to nearly five thousand lines, not to mention a

considerable section now lost. The *St. Etheldreda*, which is also preserved incompletely, is a shorter work: we have of it somewhat more than eleven hundred verses. It includes, however, an account of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy and many genealogical details about the East-Anglian royal house to which belonged St. Audrey, the foundress of Ely. The writer had access, as he stated, to local records, just as did the compiler of *St. Editha:* a fact that gives both legends a certain corroborative historical value. A careful study of them from this point of view is much to be desired.

Even more necessary, I believe, is a thoroughgoing investigation of the date at which they were written, the more urgently necessary because linguistic students are accustomed to use them as examples of Wiltshire dialect at the very beginning of the fifteenth century. That this was their actual date seems to me quite impossible. Towards the end of *St. Editha* (vv. 4970–72) the author remarked that he was using a record of the saint's miracles made three hundred and forty years before. The latest miracle to which he could refer must have taken place during the reign of Henry I, who ruled from 1100 to 1135. This evidence, which is certainly more weighty than that presented by Dr. Horstmann and Professor Heuser, would bring the legend down to about 1450 at the very earliest. However, a more elaborate study of the problem than I have as yet been able to make must be carried through before we can be certain just when these crude but interesting documents were written.

At the very end of the century — in 1497, he tells us — Laurentius Wade produced a life of *St. Thomas of Canterbury*. He was a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury, and had thus the impulse of local tradition for his work. He did not, however, add anything to the biography of Becket, but was content to follow the narrative of Herbert of Bosham, piecing it out with a few brief excerpts from the life by John Grandison of Exeter. In only one respect did he make of his material anything but the baldest translation: he moralized in the manner of Lydgate and Capgrave. Indeed, the legend is a late example of their manner, a sporadic echo after silence had for some decades fallen upon the makers of lives of saints in verse. It remains to add that this valueless work consists of three hundred and twenty-nine seven-line stanzas, arranged like rhyme royal but substituting an adaptation of the native four-beat line for the normal one of five accents.

The same curious metre was used, but more effectively, by Henry Bradshaw, a Benedictine of Chester, in a *Life of St. Werburghe*, which he wrote in 1513. Bradshaw, of whose life we know little, is said to have been educated in theology at Gloucester College, Oxford, but to have passed most of his days in St. Werburghe's monastery at Chester. He was also the author of a Latin work, *De Antiquitate et Magnificentia Urbis Chestriæ Chronicon*, and may have written a life of *St. Radegunde* in English, though the latter possibility rests upon the casual attribution by the gentleman who owned

the unique copy of the legend some sixty years ago. The *St. Werburghe* is known to us through Pynson's edition of 1521. According to a prologue in acrostic verse and to two appended poems, Henry Bradshaw must have died in the very year in which he completed his *magnum opus*. The praise of his friends is somewhat fulsome, yet a modicum of it cannot be denied his poem. He was the last writer of verse legends before the Reformation, and he was not altogether unworthy to close the series.

The *Life of St. Werburghe* is, in reality, more than the title indicates: it contains genealogies of the Old English royal houses, brief lives of St. Audrey and St. Sexburga, a history of Chester down to the end of the twelfth century, and accounts of various miracles done through the merits of Chester's patron saint. These mixed materials Bradshaw derived both from saints' lives and from chronicles. For Werburghe's own career and her miracles he relied on what he called "the thrid Passionary," "which boke remayneth in Chester monastery"; but he quoted also Bede, Henry of Huntington, William of Malmesbury, Giraldus Cambrensis, Alfred of Beverley, and Higden's *Polychronicon*. He was, it will be seen, a somewhat learned man; and, since part of his legendary sources are not now known to exist, he gave his work more than a little documentary value. As to form, he was less adept. Although he exclaims: —

> What were mankynde without lytterature?
> Full lytell worthy blynded by ignoraunce,

he had little power of co-ordinating diverse matters into unity. He was writing

> To the comyn vulgares theyr mynde to satysfy,

and he plodded methodically through the task with no thought of architectonics. Yet his poem is not without interest and value as a narrative. The verse, at first stiff and awkward, grows more supple as the work proceeds, while the monk's visual imagination gives passages like those describing Werburghe's entrance on conventual life at Ely, and the translation of her relics to Chester, a brilliancy that one would not expect from the duller parts of the history. As a whole, when once the historical introduction is passed, the two books of the poem can be read with considerable pleasure as well as profit. Through five thousand five hundred and sixty-five lines one is carried not uncomfortably, becoming increasingly conscious, the while, of the swinging rhythm in a verse to which it is very difficult for the modern ear to adjust itself. To show Bradshaw's descriptive powers, it is perhaps worth while to quote one stanza concerning the royal feast at Ely when Werburghe was received as probationer.

> The tables were covered with clothes of Dyaper,
> Rychely enlarged with sylver and with golde;
> The cupborde with plate shynynge fayre and clere.
> Marshalles theyr offyces fulfylled manyfolde.
> Of myghty wyne plenty bothe newe and olde,
> All-maner kynde of meetes delycate
> (When grace was sayd) to them was preparate.

As has been said, the practice of writing saints' lives in English prose fell into disuse at the beginning of the thirteenth century and was not revived until Chaucer's later years. Except for two or three works, indeed, to which I shall immediately refer, all the later Middle English legends in prose, as far as known to us, can be ascribed to the fifteenth century. More exact dating with regard to some of them is impossible, for the present at least, though a division can be made between those produced during the first and during the second half of the century. John Mirk's *Festial*, it will be remembered, was compiled before 1415. Although some few of these fifteenth century legends have great interest either as hagiographical documents or as examples of the prose style that was forming itself in that era, they were for the most part mere translations, and translations not very happily performed. As a body of work, their importance lies in their illustrating in a new way the yet unfailing appeal of saints' lives to the reading public.

The most notable instance of a prose legend from the fourteenth century is the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. To the studies of Professor W. H. Hulme in this field we are indebted for most of the information that we possess. He has shown that of seven apparently independent prose translations of the ever-popular work two were made before the fifteenth century came in. One of these was from the pen of the otherwise celebrated John of Trevisa, the translator of Higden's *Polychronicon* and Bartholomew of Glanville's *De Proprietatibus Rerum;* and was probably

done at some time between 1385 and 1400. It was undertaken at the request of Lord Berkeley, to whom Trevisa was chaplain. The translator of the other fourteenth century version seems to have been, like Trevisa, from a southern county. He appears to have been interested only in the portion of the gospel that dealt with Joseph of Arimathea, unless, indeed, the unique manuscript misleads us.

During the first half of the fifteenth century, the work was translated again, but again only in so far as it dealt with the story of Joseph. During the second half of the century, however, two complete translations were made independently, one of which (in MS. Harl. 149) is considered by Professor Hulme to be the most readable of them all. It is possible that the sixth version of the gospel, which is only a fragment, was not made until the beginning of the sixteenth century, at about the same time with the seventh. This last translation was the one that found its way into print. It was issued as early as 1507, and for two centuries remained the popular account of the apocryphal story of Christ's passion and descent into Hell. Wynkyn de Worde alone published it five times between 1509 and 1532. Because of its long-continued history and the consequent influence that it must have had in forming the notions of English writers, it has great importance, the more so that it seems to have been based on a Latin text different from any yet discovered. It purports to be translated from French, as a matter of fact, but from the French of Bishop Turpin! For a

solution of this and of many other puzzles we must await the publication by Professor Hulme[1] of these Middle English versions, and by Professor von Dobschütz of his new edition of the *Evangelium Nicodemi*.

Aside from the earlier translations of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, a *Life of Adam and Eve* in the Vernon MS. was also a work of the closing years of the fourteenth century. It was made, or at least is preserved to us, in the dialect of the South, and is a brief rendering of the Latin *Vita Adæ et Evæ* that had already been done into English verse. It has traces, moreover, of the story of the cross-wood. In the style of this unambitious and unadorned rendering of the legend there is much to commend. The anonymous writer succeeded in getting the same effect of easy conversational prose that is characteristic of Wyclif and John of Trevisa. Perhaps it was because, like them, he was untroubled by rhetoric.

The same praise can scarcely be given to *The Three Kings of Cologne*, an abridged translation of John of Hildesheim's *Historia Trium Regum*, which was made about 1400. In other respects than style, however, *The Three Kings* is a most interesting work. John of Hildesheim's book, which he compiled in Latin shortly before 1375, represented the culmination of popular interest in the legend and incorporated a great mass of tradition. The wide success that it won was merited by the circumstantial air with which it invested a variety of curious

[1] There is a prose *St. Catharine* in MS. Stonyhurst College, B. XLIII, referred to by Professor Hulme, which deserves investigation.

and fabulous stories, while the information that it gave about the Orient, though far from accurate, must have been captivating indeed to the age of Mandeville. The English translator, who probably lived in the South Midland district, was able, though a clumsy writer, to give his readers all the essential qualities of the work; and his translation had a corresponding popularity. The extent to which the book was read is attested by the number of fifteenth century manuscripts, more or less shortened or extended, in which it is found, and also by the fact that at least five prints were made of it between 1499 and 1530.

The tendency of early fifteenth century writers, even when they used English without any skill whatsoever, to make new works by translating excerpts from various Latin ones, is illustrated by a prose *St. Anthony of Egypt*. The *vita* was taken from Evagrius; the invention and the first translation of Anthony's relics were culled from Jerome's rendering of a Greek original by Theophilus of Constantinople; while the second translation was from still another book. The West Midland author of the English prose version had no style: his work is both clumsy and dull. Yet it has its importance, as several such documents do, from the fact that one section of it was based, like a French translation of about the same period, on a text of Jerome not now accessible. Professor Holthausen has made this clear with reference to the *St. Anthony*.

The literature of visions likewise made its way into

prose at this time. Shortly after 1409, as it appears, William Staunton, a native of Durham, wrote a new version of *St. Patrick's Purgatory*. As Professor Krapp showed in his edition of this interesting document, it is impossible to discover that the writer copied the earlier accounts of the vision in any immediate way: he gave the story as it had been modified by the generations through which it had been orally transmitted. He was, indeed, a plain man who wrote merely to set down certain interesting facts, regardless of the stubborn nature of language. In the same fashion, two unpublished *Visions of St. Bridget* are business-like translations from Latin rather than works of literary pretension. Later in the century there was made a complete version of the celebrated *Vision of a Monk of Eynsham*, a black-letter print of which was issued about 1482. Throughout the century the current of vision-literature thus held its course in prose; and it will be remembered that visions are also found in verse from the earlier part of the Middle English period.

Two of the most interesting prose legends of the entire century were the two from the pen of John Capgrave, whose poetical work has already been considered. These prose lives were *St. Augustine of Hippo* and *St. Gilbert of Sempringham*. The second of them was dated 1451; and since it was undertaken for Nicholas Reysby, "Master of the Order of Sempringham," because of his favorable notice of the *St. Augustine*, we may suppose that the earlier work had not long been completed before the later was begun. Thus they stand at the very middle of

the century, and they are as representative of the time as of the author. It must be said of them, I think, that they are more interesting than Capgrave's legends in verse, probably because of the greater simplicity with which he handled prose. He was not tempted to garnish it with fine flowers to show his learning; he would scarcely have thought of making it an exercise in fluent rhetoric. As a result, he wrote plainly and forcibly, yet not without the graceful dignity characteristic of the best fifteenth century prose. Although he was sometimes translating quite literally a Latin text, the success of his style cannot be attributed to that fact. It was probably due, rather, to having his ear attuned to the rhythms of good Latin, which he transferred intelligently to English speech.

For the *St. Augustine* we know no Latin source. Capgrave, who speaks of himself in his preface as "a man sumwhat endewid in lettirur," says that he was asked by an unnamed gentlewoman to write the life, "that is to sey, to translate hir treuly oute of Latyn." If it be true that a *Vita S. Augustini* is among his lost Latin works, I see no reason for not supposing that he may have been translating his own production. From the fact that he did not allude to it, the editor of the prose lives, Mr. J. J. Munro, thinks such a relationship improbable; but to me this is not weighty evidence. As Mr. Munro points out, Capgrave seems throughout the *St. Augustine* to be handling his material without the restrictions by which any translator is bound. In the case of the *St. Gilbert*

he followed the standard Latin life rather literally, adding, however, some things "which men of that ordre have told me, and eke othir thingis that schul falle to my mynde in the writyng." This work thus possesses a certain independent value, though a restricted one, for the history of the establishment, in the twelfth century, of the only monastic order founded in mediæval England.

At about the time when Capgrave was making his prose legends, another East Midland writer was translating the life of *Mary Magdalene* from the *Legenda Aurea*. It will be recalled that a complete prose rendering of *Legenda Aurea*, afterwards popularized by Caxton, was made in 1438; but this isolated life of the *Magdalene* seems to have been independently translated, from the French form of the book. At least, I see no reason to question Zupitza's conclusion that such was the case. Though an adequate version, it has not the charm of Caxton's; and its sole interest is as an illustration of the way in which, in an age of manuscripts, the journeyman work of literature was frequently repeated because of the difficulty in finding out what had been already done. The service of the printing-press in this particular is seldom fully realized.

Of somewhat uncertain date are three independent translations of the passion of *St. Dorothea*, which illustrate even more forcibly the waste of effort just mentioned. By a detailed study of their content, Dr. J. M. Peterson has shown that they were based on two slightly different Latin texts, though their variations are not con-

siderable. Indeed, they differ only in minor details from one another, from Osbern Bokenam's legend, and from the poetical version that I have tentatively ascribed to Capgrave. Until the later forms of the Latin legend have been submitted to a searching analysis, it will be impossible to straighten out the tangle of these five translations in fifteenth century English. In this connection, the necessity for a completer knowledge of the textual history of *Legenda Aurea*, and for a more inclusive text than that found in Graesse's famous edition, may well be called to the attention of scholars. Hagiological studies in all the vernacular literatures of Europe are hampered by our ignorance with reference to the great Latin thesaurus of legend.

A prose life of *St. Jerome* is included in a manuscript containing one of the prose versions of *St. Dorothea*, and presumably was made at about the same time. The writer, like Capgrave and the author of the anonymous *St. Anthony* from the earlier part of the century, was compiler as well as translator. His first chapter he made up of extracts from *Legenda Aurea*, and the remainder of his rather long work from the correspondence falsely attributed to St. Augustine and St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Although sufficiently faithful to his original while translating, he thus produced what was virtually a new work, omitting, abbreviating, arranging. From the point of view of fifteenth century literature, at least, the book has value: it is readable, and it shows what the men of that day cared to read.

Quite possibly the translator of this prose *St. Jerome* was an Oxonian contemporary of Capgrave's, Thomas Gascoigne, a scholar whose virtues and learning were not lessened by his amusing egotism; a vehement opponent of the Wyclifites, who yet on his own account attacked abuses in the Church unsparingly; and altogether one of the most interesting figures of his day. He was born in 1403 and died in 1458; and, though he held at one time or another various ecclesiastical preferments, he passed nearly all his working years at Oriel College. He wrote, we know, a *Life of St. Jerome*, of which some inedited fragments remain in the library of Magdalen College, — perhaps the same manuscript of the work that Leland once saw at Oseney Abbey. He also translated for the sisters of the Brigettine house of Sion, Islesworth, a *Life of St. Bridget of Sweden*, which is supposed to be the one printed by Pynson in 1516. The similarity in language and style between the *St. Jerome* that has been edited and the *St. Bridget* printed by Pynson makes the theory that both of them were done by Gascoigne very plausible. The *St. Bridget* is certainly one of the best pieces of prose translation from its time, and not to be regarded wholly with condescension by ours. To Gascoigne has sometimes been attributed also a *Life of St. Catharine*, the daughter of St. Bridget of Sweden; but erroneously, as the inedited manuscript of the work (Digby 172) expressly states. It cannot, however, have been made much later than his day. I regret that I have as yet had no opportunity to read this legend.

In another manuscript of the time, which once belonged to the Priory of Beauvale in Nottinghamshire, are found lives of four women saints, all of them celebrated as mystics. Since a single anonymous "compilour" was responsible for the form of all four, they might almost be classed among collections; yet their interest is individual, and their sources are various. The translator excuses himself for writing "umwhile sotheren, otherewhile northen," but gives no further information about his work save that he did it at the command of his prior. Presumably he was himself a monk of Beauvale.

The life of *St. Elizabeth of Spalbeck* was faithfully translated, though with some abridgment, from the Latin of Philip of Clairvaux. Philip encountered the saint during official visitations of the Cistercian abbey near her home, and investigated her case with a seemingly impartial mind. Elizabeth of Spalbeck, or of Erkenrode as she is more commonly termed, was a Belgian ecstatic of the most pronounced type, subject to seizures at the celebration of the hours and of the mass, and bearing the stigmata. Like Elizabeth was the more celebrated *Christina Mirabilis*, a Belgian of the same century, whose life was taken from the *Vita* by Thomas Chantimpré, the Dominican. No more extraordinary manifestations of mystical fervor have ever been set down than those recorded in this life, for which Thomas says he got the information from eyewitnesses. Christina was resuscitated after being thought dead, and was subsequently tormented in a hundred ways, being permitted to suffer Purgatory in this life.

She is reported to have cast herself into hot fires and boiling cauldrons, for example, without injury, though she suffered frightful agonies at the time. At length her body became so "subtile" that she could hang on the smallest twigs of trees. The life of *St. Mary of Oignies*, freely translated from the account of Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, which was written in 1215, two years after the saint's death, is a less extravagant record. Jacques de Vitry was her confessor and, as there is every reason to believe, a conscientious biographer. St. Mary of Oignies was a mystic of pronounced type but not, like Elizabeth and Christina, open to the suspicion of nervous disorder. In the sketch of *St. Catharine of Siena*, which was translated from a letter by the Carthusian Stephen of Siena, there is found an even nobler picture of religious exaltation. Something of the grace and humor with which Stephen's account is touched was preserved by the fifteenth century translator. Of the four lives, the most deserving of praise is this, largely because it describes one of the most extraordinary and admirable figures of the Middle Ages.

The interest that William Caxton took in saints' lives has already been shown by reference to his editions of Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*, John Mirk's *Festial*, and the *Golden Legend*. Other manifestations of his activity were prose lives of *St. Wenefred*, "reduced" by him about 1485, and a translation of Raymond of Capua's life of *St. Catharine of Siena*, which was issued from his shop, but probably not until a little after his death, under the

direction of Wynkyn de Worde. Reprints of both we owe to Dr. Horstmann. The former was perhaps based on the Latin legend written by Prior Robert of Shrewsbury about 1140, but it shows the freedom with which Caxton was accustomed to treat a text. It is, indeed, a good example of the style familiar to readers of his translations: easy of flow, ready of diction, natural of construction. Its unaffected simplicity, no less than the richness of the narrative, makes it one of the best examples of fifteenth century prose. Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde were less fortunate in their edition of *St. Catharine of Siena*, which was a rather thin and confused translation, scarcely worthy of perpetuation. Possibly they may have recognized these defects, for little pains could have gone to the making of their very imperfect print.

Wynkyn de Worde, as Caxton's successor, made the issuing of saints' lives a not unimportant part of his work. To him we owe not only the *Nova Legenda Angliæ* and a prose version in English of *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins*, but *The Lyfe of St. Brandan* from the *Golden Legend*. Of the English hagiographical works that he printed perhaps the most interesting, however, was *The Martiloge in Englysshe after the Use of the chirche of Salisbury and as it is redde in Syon With addicyons*, which he put forth in 1526. This translation of the martyrology of the Brigettine monastery of Sion, Islesworth, was the work of Richard Whitford, a brother of the house, and was made for the edification of the unlearned members

of the establishment "that dayly dyd rede the same martiloge in latyn not understandynge what they redde." Not contented, however, with translating his original, Whitford made very large additions, of no liturgical authority, from such standard books as the *Legenda Aurea* and the *Catalogus Sanctorum* by Petrus de Natalibus. He thus doubled the size of the compilation and made it an extensive, though not authoritative, sanctilogium, which has still its value as a work of reference.

From the presses of Pynson and Redman, likewise, books of legends were issued, some of which we have noticed. Yet printing could not keep saints' lives as a literary type from decay. By the end of the fifteenth century, the writing of legends had virtually ceased—in prose as in verse. During the entire Middle English period the *genre* had been singularly responsive to the tendencies, political and literary, that marked the centuries; and it was responsive to the end. The approach of the Reformation must have been felt as the sixteenth century began. One of the portents, indeed, was this somewhat sudden cessation in the activities of legend-writers. The type had flourished with the Middle Ages. With the close of the era it fell into decay; or, to speak with greater accuracy, the springs of it were dried up. The faith of believers was not quenched, but the majority of them in England were never again to find help and inspiration in the records of the martyrs and confessors of the past. For the Protestant majority that source of profit ceased to exist except as a by-word and a scorn.

And with the change of religious attitude towards the saints, saintly biography as a major type perished. Henceforward, in English literature, it was destined to be a sporadic and, for the most part, a feeble growth, vitalized among Protestants only by romantic interest or by scholarly enthusiasm, while among Catholics it shared the obscurity to which they were doomed for more than two centuries and a half.

CHAPTER VIII

SAINTS' LIVES IN DRAMA

N order to review the part taken by saints' lives in English drama, it is necessary for us to retrace some of our steps in the mediæval period; indeed, so fragmentary are our records of such representations that isolated treatment of them is inevitable. Almost without exception the saints' plays of the Middle Ages, strictly speaking, have perished. It is only by gathering together scattered references to their performance that one can form even an approximately accurate judgment as to their qualities and their influence. Thus they cannot well be treated along with other manifestations of the type; they must be separately considered.

The extent to which they were written and performed is usually underestimated, partly because they have been lost and partly because several great cycles of plays based on biblical narrative have survived. Upon these cycles and upon the liturgical origins of the drama the attention of scholars has, quite naturally and properly, been centred, because through them the development of the popular drama can be most conveniently traced. It is unfortunate, however, that the impression should be prevalent, as I fear is the case, that saints' lives were not

very often dramatized during the period when miracle plays flourished. The evidence is, we shall see, that from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries such subjects were frequently chosen for popular representation. Developing from the ritual of the Church as it did, the cyclic drama was in the nature of things chiefly composed of biblical material; but this did not satisfy the dramatic appetite of the public, which found other subjects to its liking in the ever popular lives of saints. Thus during the centuries when legends were most cultivated for recitation and reading, they were most often turned to account as material for drama. If it seems strange that we have no more records of these plays than we possess, and almost no texts, let the devastating vandalism of the Reformation not be forgotten: whatever pertained to the saints was peculiarly liable to destruction in the general pillage that wrecked so many libraries.

It is certainly noteworthy that the earliest reference to a play in England should be the *St. Catharine* that Geoffrey, a Norman clerk, prepared for the school of St. Albans. Matthew Paris records that Geoffrey borrowed certain copes for the performance, which were burned with his house at Dunstable, Bedfordshire. This must have been in the earlier years of the twelfth century, since Geoffrey became a monk on account of his misfortune, and was made abbot of St. Albans in 1119. This school play must, of course, have been in Latin, but its existence shows plainly that in England, as in France, dramas based on the lives of saints were customary from a very early date.

What the plays were like, that William Fitzstephen alluded to in the preface to his *Vita* of St. Thomas Becket, we do not know: merely that London in his time had "representations of miracles which holy confessors have done, or representations of the passions in which the constancy of martyrs has shone forth." Whether or not they were in Latin, which seems unlikely since they were for popular representation, the record makes clearer the fact that saints' plays were not unknown in England before the rise of the dramatic cycles. William Fitzstephen died at some time between 1170 and 1182.

There is no further record of dramatic performances based on saints' lives, as far as I know, until the fourteenth century. This, however, is by no means satisfactory evidence that such plays were not presented. Information as to the drama in thirteenth century England is almost wholly lacking. Not until the processional cycles came into existence, soon after the establishment, in 1311, of the feast of Corpus Christi, does the record become in any respect adequate. Indeed, though we can justly refer the authorship of the surviving texts to the fourteenth century, most of the references to performances that have come to light are from the fifteenth or the early sixteenth century. In these circumstances one must take for granted that saints' plays, like other plays, developed during a period concerning which we have very little dramatic knowledge. We must consider them as they were after secularization was well-nigh complete and drama had become, for the

most part, the cherished plaything of guilds and town councils.

Altogether, the lives of about twenty-five saints are known to have been dramatized before the Reformation, and some of them several times over. Since we have remaining to us from this period, aside from the cyclic miracles and scattering works of similar content, only three dramas of the legendary type, we can get our surest knowledge of the general scope of such plays from a study of subjects and of representations. Let us first see what can be learned from the list of non-existent saints' plays.

This list, which can be made up only through the somewhat casual references of account-books and municipal or monastic records, is necessarily very far from complete. The extant allusions to such matters are so scattered as to make an exhaustive search for them almost impossible; and the loss of documents by various means has been so great that it is difficult, on the basis of survivals, to estimate the extent to which saints' plays may have been cultivated. Yet there is safety in supposing that the records we possess represent in a general way the subjects chosen for such dramas, and to a somewhat less degree their comparative popularity.

Of the saints' legends so treated nearly all were stock subjects of narrative in verse and prose. Naturally enough, the authors of such representations took stories about which some knowledge on the part of the audiences could be presupposed. Thus the names encountered in

the records are familiar ones, and are frequently repeated. Mediæval drama, though its primary purpose may have been instruction, could not well present ideas or incidents that would be hard for a jostling crew of citizens and rustics to grasp. St. George, St. Catharine, St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Margaret, St. Lawrence — such names as these show the kind of material demanded by the conditions. Of them all, St. George seems to have been the most popular, at least after the middle of the fifteenth century. Of the eight towns where we know that his legend was dramatically presented, only Norwich seems to have celebrated him earlier than 1450; at Norwich a "riding" on St. George's Day, presumably with a play about the saint, was held from 1408 on. This increasing vogue as a subject for dramatic spectacles accompanied, of course, the strengthening of St. George's hold on the popular mind as the Patron of England. Of all legends, moreover, his was least affected by the Reformation, for the ideal he embodied was deeply imbedded in national life; whence it came about that he survived as the hero of many folk-plays sufficiently removed in spirit and content from the mediæval legend.

With regard to other saints, the information obtainable does not show any marked preponderance in popularity of one over another. The striking thing that emerges from a scrutiny of the list is the fact that we know of only three cases in which native saints became the subjects of mediæval plays. It is of record that St. Bride

(Bridget) was so honored in 1442 and again in 1505–6, at Aberdeen; that in 1523 a play of St. Swithin was "acted in the Church" at Braintree, Essex; and that interludes of St. Thomas Becket were played at King's Lynn and Norwich, in Norfolk — in the former place as early as 1385. At Canterbury, rather curiously, the only mention of St. Thomas in connection with the drama concerns the pageant, probably a dumb-show, which was held on his day from 1504–5 until "far on in the reign of Queen Elizabeth." We ought not to suppose, I feel sure, that the martyrdom of St. Thomas was not elsewhere presented, nor that the legends of many other native saints were not taken for dramatic themes. It does appear fairly certain, however, that the great martyrs and confessors of the Church at large were more commonly the subjects of plays than the heroes of the Church in England. The same tendency that has been noted in connection with the writing of mediæval legendaries and individual legends would thus have been operative in the making of popular dramas.

The lost saints' plays, which we are considering, must in the nature of things have been very various in quality and in tendency. Most of them were produced in towns of some size by one or another of the guilds, to which the development of the drama owed so much; but for others churches, monastic establishments, or colleges were responsible. Very different from the ruder town plays must have been the mumming at Windsor in 1429–30, into which Lydgate introduced St. Clotilda, or the "play

of Placidas, *alias* St. Eustace" at Braintree, Essex, in 1534, which may have been written by Nicholas Udall, the author of the first "regular" comedy in English. Learned also, and learned in the older manner, must have been the Protestant John Bale's lost comedy, *De Imposturis Thomæ Becketi*, mentioned by him among his English plays, most of which were based on biblical narratives. Whether or not this particular drama was ever performed, as some of his pieces were, we are not informed. Both Udall's and Bale's works belong, of course, rather to the preparatory period of Tudor drama than to the mediæval stage; but when Udall was vicar of Braintree, the Reformation was only just beginning, and plays were still sometimes given in the churches. Long before his day, however, the drama had become prevailingly the concern of the secular authorities, and the grosser elements of comedy had been introduced into sacred themes. There is no reason to believe that the generality of saints' plays differed markedly in character from the biblical plays from which we gain most of our first-hand knowledge of the developed mediæval drama in England.

As has been said, it was the cyclic drama that best withstood the ravages of the Reformation. Largely by chance, no doubt, but by reason also of their wider dissemination and more enduring popularity these plays have become our chief mediæval texts; nor could the reformers have felt the same passion to destroy plays based on the Bible that they must have felt with reference

to the legendary drama. Four cycles of them have survived, indeed, with reasonable completeness: the four famous cycles concerning which every text-book of English literature informs its readers. Fragments of four other cycles have come down to us, by which to check the general conclusions drawn from the York, Chester, Towneley or Wakefield, and Hegge plays (the last equally well known as the *Ludus Coventriæ*). The scope of several other cycles we also know from the records of their performance. Into the vexing questions of the origin and dates of the individual cycles it is not necessary for us to enter, since these matters in no way affect the problems at hand. It is sufficient to say that the earliest of them must have been compiled towards the middle of the fourteenth century and that, as we have them, they are undoubtedly of composite authorship. All of them, it must be remembered, are in verse — often in verse of intricate design.

These so-called miracle plays were based, of course, on biblical narrative; as cycles they spanned sacred history, sometimes from the creation to the day of judgment. From their inclusiveness it was inevitable that they should embody material drawn from apocryphal writings. In so far as they did so, they drew upon sources intimately connected with hagiographical literature and used certain stories with which we have dealt in earlier chapters. Yet, as a matter of fact, it was almost wholly in the New Testament series that they were dependent on apocryphal texts. Only in the *Chester Plays* have I noted

anything that seems to indicate a knowledge of the legends dealing with Old Testament personages; and the possible French influence on the Chester cycle should make one wary of basing general conclusions upon its phenomena. In passing, it may be well to say that the Cornish cycles contain the legend of Adam's death and the Cross-wood, which shows the possibility that some of the lost English series used similar material. With regard to the New Testament, however, the authors of all the extant plays drew on apocryphal stories with free hand. In the *York Plays*, for example, traces have been found of the *Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Proto-Gospel of St. James*, and two versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, as well as material concerning the birth and death of the Virgin and an allusion to the Cross legend. The *Hegge Plays* were based on the apocryphal gospels to an even greater extent, while the borrowings of the Towneley and Chester cycles were considerable. All this was perfectly natural; to the consciousness of the English populace, at least, there was no distinction in credibility between the canonical books and the tissue of legend with which they had been enlarged. Indeed, it is altogether certain that from the middle of the fourteenth century the cyclic drama was a most powerful agency for the wider dissemination of such fabulous stories.

With saints' lives in the narrower and stricter sense the cycles had little to do, though the Veronica scene in the *Hegge Plays* and the similar allusion in the York cycle show how easily such material could find a place. Of the

same character is the incident of the healing of Longinus, which was incorporated in the crucifixion scenes of the four great cycles. To draw any hard and fast lines would have been impossible, and would have occurred to no one.

Whether or no saints' plays, by themselves, were ever performed in series, like the biblical cycles, is uncertain. On this account it is unfortunate that we have not more information about the Corpus Christi celebration at Aberdeen, Scotland, from 1510 until 1556 or later. In 1531 there was an order that the crafts furnish their pageants as usual, and a list was subjoined. The fleshers furnished St. "Bestian" (presumably Sebastian) and his tormentors, the barbers St. Lawrence and his tormentors, the cordwainers St. Martin, the tailors the Coronation of Our Lady, the litsters St. Nicholas, the websters and others the Resurrection, and the smiths "the Bearmen of the Cross." If this notice refers to anything more than a dumb-show, something very like a cycle of saints' plays must have been performed, though a cycle of which the various parts would not have been schematically connected. No texts are preserved, however, and the meaning of the notices is far from clear. Elsewhere, so far as I know, there is no suggestion that saints' plays may have been joined together as were the biblical dramas. Nothing, however, would have been more natural. In the case of Aberdeen, the fact that the procession was continued until so late as the second half of the sixteenth century makes one a little skeptical as to whether it was actually accompanied by plays, yet the citizens might possibly

have clung to their established drama past the Reformation.

One curious survival from the second half of the fifteenth century is the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, which is unique in being the only drama known to us, either by text or by contemporary notice, that was based on an *exemplum*. It thus merits the name of miracle play more exactly than do the biblical cycles, to which ancient usage has assigned the term. The piece comes from the East Midlands, though at which of the five Croxtons in that region it was performed there is no sure means of knowing. Such plays were by no means uncommon on the Continent. Indeed, the theme of the Croxton play itself — the outrage done upon the consecrated host by a Jew — was used by dramatists of Italy, France, and the Netherlands. The English play is chiefly peculiar in its *dénoûment:* the Jew and his accomplices are converted by the miracle, absolved, and baptized. Undoubtedly the story upon which the play was based was disseminated from France, where the legend was known as early as the end of the thirteenth century, but the scene of the English version was laid in Spain. This means, I take it, that the author formed his drama on a stock *exemplum*, a theory confirmed by the Latin lines with which it is interlarded. Such anecdotes, it may be remarked, were not infrequently given a Spanish setting at that period. The play is a crude production that could have been pleasing only to a very unsophisticated audience. It has an abundance of grotesque humor, but lacks the simple dignity that

makes so much early drama appealing to our modern taste. Its importance to our present investigation is merely that it illustrates what many saints' plays must have been like.

More learned and worshipful are *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene*, which are found in the early sixteenth century Digby MS. 133, but which were undoubtedly written in the Midlands during the latter part of the previous century. Both of them have some merit, though they were perhaps less well adapted than plays of the Croxton type to please the coarser groundlings of the day. In quality of verse they smack strongly of the pious school of legend-writers, of which Lydgate was the master. Their authors must have been men of the stamp of Osbern Bokenam, the Austin friar of Suffolk.

The Conversion of St. Paul, save for a scene in which the devils Belial and Mercury lament the loss of their "darling" Saul, is wholly based on the biblical narrative. Though its materials are thus not apocryphal, it has all the ear-marks of legend in its treatment. It was played in three stations, but would have required no great elaboration and may well have been designed, according to the conjecture of Mr. Chambers in *The Mediæval Stage*, for performance in a small village. Throughout, the Poeta himself served as master of ceremonies, usefully but apologetically. One would like to think that this simple and dignified play was typical of saints' plays in general; but it is to be feared that more boisterous drama would have been better loved.

Far more ambitious than *The Conversion of St. Paul* is *Mary Magdalene.* It is more than two thousand lines in length, and is divisible into fifty-two scenes. Evidently it was devised for a somewhat elaborate setting, and it could hardly have been played except by a company with considerable resources. More than sixty characters, not to mention attendants and "the pepul," were necessary to its performance, while such stage-directions as "Here xall entyre a shyp with a mery song" indicate the extent to which the author called for ingenious and expensive mechanical devices. The action covers the entire legendary history of Mary Magdalene, as it was developed in the West, from the death of her father to her apostolate in France and her own death there. Since the story is treated throughout with considerable amplitude, it is not extraordinary that the play is long. Yet the introduction of several allegorical figures like the Seven Deadly Sins and the Kings of the Flesh and of the World, which serves to connect the drama with the moralities of the time, does not clog its movement. As a matter of fact, there is little padding, and almost no interruption of the action save by the devils and angels who play the part of chorus. The scenes have robust vigor and considerable richness of dramatic action, yet they do not descend into broad farce for the sake of contrast. Mary's downfall, for example, is managed with a delicacy that shows not a little imaginative insight on the part of the unknown dramatist. There is much rant in the play, to be sure, but there are few lapses into dull debate or un-

motivated action. The simplicity of the technique does not spoil the effect desired; but the appeal made by the drama is not wholly through its simplicity. According to its kind, it has genuine dramatic worth. Despite its length, it is not tedious.

Less praise can be given the only saint's play that has survived from the period between the Reformation and the very end of the sixteenth century. This is likewise a dramatization of the Magdalene's story. *The Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene*, by Lewis Wager, was first printed in 1566, though probably written during the reign of Edward VI. As Professor Carpenter has pointed out in the introduction to his edition, "the play is essentially a morality-play." Like most of the morals, it was composed from the Protestant point of view; and its chief aim was to drive home the lesson of repentance and of salvation by faith. Somewhat curiously, Wager chose to weave his allegory about a figure who had been a favorite of Catholic legend. Accordingly, he produced a work that stands, in the matter of content, between the older miracle plays and other moralities. He was very far, however, from following the legend of Mary that the later Middle Ages had developed. Except in one or two minor particulars he based his scenes on the story:

Written in the .vii. of Luke with wordes playne.

In manner and technique his play is wholly a morality, and neither better nor worse than most works of its class. The stilted language and the awkward versification detract from its effectiveness almost as much as does the

overwrought allegory. What Wager attempted could have been accomplished successfully only by a writer of genuine talent; and Wager, it is to be feared, was merely a versifying parson.

The loss of plays by Nicholas Udall and John Bale has already been noted. Did they survive, and did we still have *The Commody of the moste vertuous and godlye Susanna* by Thomas Garter (licensed in 1568–9), we should be in a better position than we are at present to judge the use made of legendary themes by the earlier Protestants. With the mediæval drama, however, had perished at once the inspiration and the excuse for saints' plays. The record of them even in pre-Reformation days has been imperfectly preserved, as the slightness of the foregoing sketch will indicate, while in the development of the Elizabethan drama, legends of the saints could have, of course, no considerable part. Ever since the time of Henry VIII, the appearance of such themes on the English stage has been purely sporadic and fortuitous. Brief mention of them will suffice.

During the later years of Elizabeth's reign only one saint's play is known to have been presented. In 1599 *Sir Placidas*, presumably a dramatic rendering of the ever popular *Eustace* legend, by Henry Chettle, was produced in London. Henslowe records the fact, but the play has perished. We can only hazard the surmise that, like Partridge's poetical narrative of 1566, which dealt innocently with the same theme, Chettle's drama was so arranged as to give no shock to a Protestant audience.

In the time of James I, again, a solitary play, *The Virgin Martyr* by Massinger, is the only representative of saints' legends in the drama. This curious tragedy, which was perhaps a revision of an earlier play by Dekker, was licensed in 1620 and printed in 1622. It is a dramatization of the *Dorothea* legend, but with an admixture of elements from the vulgate lives of St. Agnes and St. Juliana. Uneven in texture, it has scenes of considerable power, yet as a whole is theatrical and tasteless. To have adapted successfully a saint's legend to the dramatic fashions of that day would have been a difficult feat; and the attempt was doomed to failure when undertaken by a writer of Massinger's narrow talent. The scenes of comedy, whether composed by himself or by Dekker, destroy the poor affectation of dignity that is supported almost wholly by rhetoric, while the catastrophe is melodramatic rather than tragic. The device of introducing a guardian angel in the disguise of Dorothea's servant illustrates the futile extravagance of the piece. Charles Lamb praised the scenes between this Angelo and the saint, but not very wisely, I think. From the point of view of legend, at least, they deserve little commendation. Perhaps, however, only a mawkish transformation like Massinger's could have found a place on the seventeenth century stage. It is to be noted that *The Virgin Martyr* was held in so much esteem that it was revived after the Restoration.

At just what date a drama entitled *St. George for England*, by Wentworth Smith, was written, we do not know, but the author's other works fall between 1601 and 1623.

A copy of *St. George for England* was among the plays destroyed by Warburton's infamous cook. Very probably it suggested the title for James Shirley's *St. Patrick for Ireland*, which was produced in 1639–40. Shirley was at that time in Ireland, writing for the Dublin stage. His play, though it does not lack the romantic vigor characteristic of the author, is even more absurd than *The Virgin Martyr* from the point of view of hagiography. Quite apart from that, moreover, dramatic propriety is grossly violated by many of the songs that are introduced, as well as by such scenes as the last, in which St. Patrick banishes the serpents from the island. Shirley's Catholicism did not prevent him from treating his theme in the stereotyped manner of tragi-comedy then in vogue. We cannot regret that he found no encouragement, as was apparently the case, to write the second part announced in the prologue. Another play by Shirley with a saint as its hero, *The Tragedy of St. Albans*, was entered on the Stationers' Register in 1639, but it has disappeared.

Meanwhile, in 1638, had been printed *The Seven Champions of Christendome* by John Kirke, which had been previously "acted at the Cocke-pit, and at the Red-Bull in St. John's Streete, with a generall liking." It is a dramatization of Richard Johnson's romance, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, which appeared in 1596. Like its source, it seems to have enjoyed a considerable popularity, but presumably only because St. George was its hero. The material was not well suited to dramatic presentation, nor was John Kirke a playwright of ability.

No other plays from the period prior to the closing of the theatres have come to my notice. The meagreness of the record would be more regrettable if the dramatists of the age could by any possibility have used saints' lives with good effect. They were, in fact, less well fitted to treat such themes than was Corneille, whose *Polyeucte* (1643) was translated, during the ascendancy of Cromwell, by Sir William Lower as *Polyeuctes, or The Martyr* (1655).

After the Restoration, the condition neither of the stage nor of public taste was such as to foster the proper dramatization of legends. Dryden's *Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr* stands, as a matter of fact, quite alone. Catharine of Alexandria is the heroine. The play is one of Dryden's series of "heroic dramas" and was produced in 1668 or 1669. In method it does not differ greatly from the more famous *Conquest of Granada:* the action is theatrically bold, and the characters are drawn, as the author flattered himself, "on a grand scale." It is to be feared, however, that the legend adapted itself almost too easily to the absurd exaggerations and the conventional mannerisms of Restoration tragedy. All the worst features of the story appear strikingly in the play, while the beauty underlying the verbiage of most accounts of the saint is completely lost to sight. Even in his later Catholic years, Dryden would have been ill fitted to treat the life of a saint with sympathetic insight; in the fourth decade of his life he was capable of nothing but melodramatic presentation of externals.

Here the matter rests. Since Dryden's day no impor-

tant attempt has been made to picture saints' lives on the English stage. Tennyson's *Becket* (1885), though a notable tragedy, is scarcely of a sort to renew the succession: it is an historical drama the hero of which happens to be canonized, but it is not a saint's play.

CHAPTER IX

THE REFORMATION AND SINCE

BY the end of the fifteenth century, as we have seen, the writing of saints' legends in England had virtually ceased. The influences that were to bring about the Reformation, with its consequent hatred and fear of Catholic tradition, as well as of Catholic dogma, had already become actively operative, though they were unrecognized. Without those deeper causes, the mingled rapacity and patriotism of Henry VIII could scarcely have succeeded in changing the bases of religion and of the English social system as they did. He would not have found ministers like Wolsey and Cromwell to do his bidding and to share his spoils, nor would he have been able to sway the mind of his people as he wished. To enter into a discussion of the complicated influences that brought about the Reformation would not here be in place. It is necessary merely to point out, as a symptom of the times, that legend-writing fell into abeyance several decades before the break with Rome, and long before the cult of saints became a thing abhorrent to the majority of the English nation.

At the same time, it is well to remember that Henry and his agents took quite definite measures to influence the opinions of the public along the lines that best suited them. Never was there a government more ruthless in

crushing opposition; but never until that time, at least, one so careful to mould the feeling of the populace into retrospective acquiescence in its most tyrannical measures. The monasteries were suppressed in spite of complaints and uprisings; and men were reconciled to the monstrous outrage not merely by the pickings that they got, but by the gradually disseminated belief that they had been rescued from the clutch of a mighty octopus. The shrines at which they worshipped were profaned and destroyed; yet in process of time they came to look back at their ways before the schism with something like horror. The less said of the motives of Henry and his ministers, the greater the charity; but in its effects the Reformation made England whole-heartedly Protestant.

Along with shrines and images, books of saints' lives fell under the ban of the Church. They could not, like ecclesiastical plate and the lead of church roofs, be sold to advantage. They could not even, like the stone of ruined architectural fabrics, be put to the base uses of the neighborhood. They could only be destroyed — as rubbish. In the wanton destruction, of course, other than legend manuscripts perished. We do not know what the book contained, of which a record exists, that was used to patch a roof; and the "whole ships full" that "grocers and soapsellers," according to John Bale's famous statement, sent "over the sea to the bookbinders" must have been mixed cargoes of manuscripts. But one has only to see the defacement of surviving books to understand the fanatical fury of the crew that was only less zealous to destroy than

to acquire. Two reports to Cromwell, cited by Cardinal Gasquet, will serve to illustrate the animus of King Henry's inquisitors. Dr. Layton wrote from Bath Abbey: "Ye shall herewith receive a book of Our Lady's miracles well able to match the Canterbury tales. Such a book of dreams as ye never saw, which I found in the library." This from the man whose letters, as Cardinal Gasquet has well said, "on the face of them, are the outpourings of a thoroughly brutal and depraved nature; even still, they actually soil the hand that touches them." Another of Cromwell's agents selected five volumes from the books of a country parson, as evidence against him, "whereof three are entitled Homeliari Johis Echii, being all three dated A.D. 1438; one book of the life of *St. Thomas Becket,* and a missal wherein is the word *papa* throughoutly uncorrected."

Although there is abundant evidence that the English people in general looked with disfavor on the changes that were wrought by the agency of such men as Cromwell employed, it was inevitable that they should at length adjust their opinions to the accomplished fact. Legends, like saints and shrines and monks, became anathema to them. Only the Catholic remnant remained to cherish such records of the past; and until the close of the eighteenth century Catholics lived in England, at most times, only on sufferance. In such circumstances, it is not extraordinary that saints' lives have had little influence in English literature from the time of Henry's break with Rome in 1534. The course they have followed has been for the

most part underground; and it is important only as illustrating a submerged current of national life. On this account a cursory treatment of legend-writing during the past four centuries is all that need be given.

In the first place, it should be noted that saints' lives did not share in the movement that brought English literature under the later Tudor sovereigns to a pitch of greatness never before attained. Their use as materials for the drama has already been discussed. Except for this unimportant contact, they were so completely neglected that the most barren century in English hagiography since missionaries first came to Britain is the sixteenth, at least if the works in Latin and French of earlier times be taken into account. A production like John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563), usually known as *Book of Martyrs*, cannot be said to come within our survey. Although Foxe sometimes mentioned canonized persons, he was too Protestant a martyrologist to regard them as saints. His sketch of the heroes of the early Church is meagre and inadequate, while his account of later figures is marked by inaccuracy and prejudice. The few legends that were actually written in this period have interest chiefly because of their rarity, and because they were written in an age when other literary types were developing with remarkable vigor.

The saints' lives that appeared in those very Protestant times were sometimes, indeed, strangely disguised. In 1566, for example, was printed *The worthie Hystorie of the most Noble and valiaunt Knight Placidas, otherwise called*

Eustas, who was martyred for the Profession of Jesus Christ. There is nothing in this doggerel version of the Eustace legend, between twelve and thirteen hundred lines long, that could have troubled the conscience of the staunchest Protestant. The fact that Eustace had been accounted a saint is alluded to in the preface but is elsewhere discreetly obscured, while his story is told merely as an example of great patience. God no longer addresses Placidas through the mouth of the stag, as in all the older versions of the story, but "out from cloudes he called to him." Only for his skill in adapting a forbidden theme does the otherwise unknown author, John Partridge, deserve praise. It is characteristic of the time, and indicative of the audience to which the work was addressed, that Partridge dedicated his verses to a "marchaunt venturer" of London, to whom Partridge was apparently chaplain.

Of scarcely greater interest is a version of the *Theophilus* legend by an equally obscure author, William Forrest, which was written in 1572. Forrest was educated at Oxford during the reign of Henry VIII, went into the Church, and took up the cudgels for Queen Katharine, in whose defense he wrote *A History of Griseldis.* Although he seems to have wavered somewhat in his adherence to Catholicism, he was made a chaplain to Queen Mary. Thereafter he must have been steadfast, since his *Theophilus*, written when he was a comparatively old man, was altogether on the Catholic side. It was, indeed, almost as much a controversial tract as a poetical narrative. Forrest took pains to justify himself for writing a miracle of

the Virgin, and in so doing he made a rather dull poem even duller. For, even without the apologetics and exhortation, this *Theophilus* would merit small praise. The crabbed verse, pedantic diction, and stilted rhetoric have no power to edify or please. Nowhere in the one hundred and seventy-nine seven-line stanzas is there anything of real worth. The legend is altogether very tedious, and worthy of mention only because such works were extremely rare at the time. It was never printed until discovered by a modern scholar, but perhaps only because in 1572 no printer could be found to handle so reactionary a work.

As far as I am aware, no saint's legend was written in England, after William Forrest's attempt, until 1595. In that year was composed a prose life of *St. Etheldreda* (Audrey), which is to be found — as yet unprinted — in a manuscript (no. 120) belonging to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. I ought, however, to warn my readers that in other manuscripts or old prints there may be legends from the sixteenth century that have escaped my notice. Yet it is safe to say that extraordinarily few were written.

The causes for this silence may be further illustrated by reference to a very popular book, of which the first edition was published in 1596.[1] Any one who has ever examined Richard Johnson's *The famous History of the seven Champions of Christendom* will see that it cannot properly be classed as a collection of saints' lives. It is rather an

[1] Entered on the Stationers' Register in 1596. Copies dated 1597, probably of the second edition, are the earliest surviving.

ultra-Protestant travesty on the legends of certain saints whose names had become so deeply impressed on folk-tradition that they could be treated as figures of romance. The wild and fabulous tale of which they are made the heroes furnishes an amusing comment on the anti-papistical fury of Elizabethan England. Seldom has fancy played about any heroes with so little restraint as in Johnson's pages. The story of St. George, for example, which forms the groundwork of the romance, is a singular fusion of the original legend with the theme of the popular mediæval romance, *Sir Beves of Hampton*. It is altogether unlikely that Johnson himself was responsible for this fusion. The account of St. George's birth that Spenser gave in the *Faerie Queene* makes clear his knowledge of some such story of the saint. It is certain, however, that Johnson bedecked the tradition with the fine feathers of Elizabethan romance and made of it what it is: something extraordinarily different from a saint's legend proper. Yet as a chap-book *The Seven Champions* had such a success that its contents have become a part of the common heritage of the English-speaking world. An age that had been bullied into hatred of the saints thus bequeathed to the generations following a sorry burlesque of saintly lives with which to amuse their children. The influence of the book on the drama has been mentioned in the chapter preceding this. To countless Protestant boys the seven champions have been heroes whom they gratefully remembered in later years — heroes of fantastic romance. So there has been formed a curious eddy of Catholic tradition

in the midst of Protestantism; an eddy, alas! that quite shockingly belies its source.

With the coming in of the seventeenth century there began a new series of saints' lives, Catholic of authorship and tendency, and furtive of publication when printed at all, yet responding to the literary fashions of the time. These works, which constitute of themselves a literature far more extensive than one would deem possible in the conditions, show that by the time of Elizabeth's death the Catholic remnant had assembled its forces and become conscious of its integrity. The foundation of the English College at Douay by Cardinal Allen, and the re-establishment there of the Benedictines, gave the Church a rallying-point within convenient distance from the shores of England and did much to preserve Catholic learning. Thence were sent out not only the missionary priests but many books of religious instruction — among them saints' legends. This literature did not become, for a very long time, an instrument of propaganda; it was designed for the spiritual sustenance of the faithful. Accordingly it had a very limited circulation and is now difficult to trace, while a good deal of it is mere translation and has no importance save as a record of religious endeavor.

The first of these works that need be mentioned is *Saint Marie Magdalens Conversion*, a poem of one hundred and ten six-line stanzas, which was put forth without indication of place or printer in 1603, the year of James I's succession. The prose address to the readers is signed J. C., initials that have not been identified. Evidently the poem

was printed for private circulation, and probably abroad. The verse is graceful, but it followed an unfortunate tradition in its conceits and over-elaborate descriptions. It is weak and tasteless in the manner of the worst Elizabethan poetry.

In 1608 appeared a more important work, the first of the long series of modern compilations designed to give general instruction in the legends of the Church. The author's name was John Watson, but like so many Catholics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he was better known by an *alias*. Thus the book is often attributed to John Wilson. Only the initials, J. W., appear on the title-page. The character of the work is best indicated by its title: *English Martyrologie; containing a Summary of the Lives of the Saintes of England, Scotland and Ireland; collected and distributed into Moneths, after the Form of a Calender, according to every Saintes Festivity.* It was valueless as a work of erudition. Indeed, it warranted the disapprobation of Bishop Challoner in the eighteenth century, who wrote: "This writer, besides omitting the greater part of the Saints of the Scots Calendar (which he never saw), and almost all the Saints of Ireland, has been guilty of many gross mistakes in History with regard to those he has commemorated, and generally been very unhappy in the choice of the materials he has made use of, omitting what would have been most edifying in the Summary he gives of the lives of those servants of God and insisting chiefly on certain marvellous events, for the most part destitute of any sufficient authority to support

them." Nevertheless, the fact of its appearance at all, and of its subsequent re-issue in 1640 and 1672, shows the important place that the book filled in the history of Catholic literature. However inadequate it may have been, it served a useful purpose.

At about the same time, apparently, Robert (or Ralph) Buckland compiled *The Lives of Women Saints of our Contrie of England. Also some other Liues of holy Women written by some of the auncient Fathers*, a work that was never printed until brought to light in our time by the indefatigable Dr. Horstmann. The only manuscript known seems to be a scribe's fair copy from the author's original, intended perhaps for the printer when an opportunity of printing came. Why the book was thus stifled at birth we can hardly hope to discover. Indeed, its date can only be inferred from the water-mark of the paper of the manuscript and from the character of the scribe's hand, which indicate that the copy was made between 1610 and 1615. The author, whose English was as Ciceronian as he could make it, evidently intended his compilation for a work of devotion in praise of virginity; but it remains as a monument of unrewarded toil, despite the carefulness of his method and the dignity of his style. It is in two parts, the first containing thirty-four lives of saintly women connected with the history of Great Britain, abridged from various Latin sources, the second consisting of seven longer lives translated from the Fathers. The first part, for which the compiler drew most largely on John of Tynemouth's *Nova Legenda Angliæ*,

though he used also recent works like Baronius' *Annales Ecclesiastici* and Lippeloo's *Vitæ Sanctorum*, is chronologically arranged. Altogether, it seems regrettable that a work of such learning, conscientiously expended, should have failed of its intended purpose.

Of the same period (about 1608–17) is Nicholas Roscarrock's *Lives of the English Saints*, a still more important collection of prose legends, which still awaits an editor. Indeed, the unique manuscript of the work has come to light more recently than is the case with any other legendary. The compiler was a man of very considerable erudition, and gathered a mass of information with regard to the saints of Great Britain that should be made accessible to scholars. Obviously the collection had no chance of finding readers, since for something like two hundred and seventy-five years it was hidden away in the library of a country-house, and later in a Cambridgeshire rectory. It is not a work that would have attracted a wide audience, in any case, since it was made by an obscure scholar for the use of other scholars. Roscarrock's antiquarian lore is, nevertheless, of marked value.

The need that was felt among English Catholics for collections of saints' lives for private reading is shown by various translations which began to appear early in the century. The collection of Alfonso Villegas first appeared in a rendering by W. and E. Kinsman in 1610–14; it was issued again in 1636, with additions from Ribadeneira; it was once more translated by John Heigham in 1650; and still another version, without date or translator's name, is

extant under the title of *Flos Sanctorum*. Pedro Ribadeneira's complete collection, moreover, was translated by Edward Dawson, and published at Douay in 1615. It is interesting to note that these two Spanish hagiographical works became known in England at a time when the Spanish influence was beginning to be felt by other departments of literature. Still another translation from the earlier decades of the century was a rendering of the *Roman Martyrology*, issued by George Keynes in 1627. The success of this can be judged by the fact that a new edition of it was published forty years later. Father Keynes did his work with remarkable skill; and his introduction is a model of devotional writing.

In the first half of the century another new phenomenon is to be observed: certain Catholic ladies began to write, and among other things to write lives of saints. Lady Elizabeth Falkland, for example, composed lives in verse of *Mary Magdalene*, of *St. Agnes*, and of *St. Elizabeth of Portugal*. Though the dates of these poems are not known to me, their period can be estimated from the stretch of Lady Elizabeth's career, 1585 to 1639. St. Elizabeth of Portugal was the subject of another of these early feminine excursions in authorship. At Brussels in 1628 was published *A short Relation of the Life, Virtues and Miracles of s. Elizabeth, called the Peacemaker, Queen of Portugall*, "translated out of Dutch" by Catherine Francis Greenung, of the order of St. Francis.

In 1631 Peter Heylyn, chaplain of Archbishop Laud, brought out *The Historie of That most famous Saint and*

Souldier of Christ Jesus St. George of Cappadocia, a work significant in several ways. It well represents the ecclesiastical tendencies of Laud and his followers. Though Heylyn was, of course, not a Catholic, he was sufficiently sympathetic with tradition to treat the legend of St. George without Protestant fury. His book, if not wise, was learned: a serious examination of a figure too intimately connected with England's history to be forgotten after the Reformation. Despite its faults, the study is important as the first sober effort of Anglican scholarship in hagiography. In another way, also, it marks the beginning of new conditions: not only was it issued, but it sold. In 1633 a new edition came from the press.

Equally significant, and much more important of itself, is an allegorical poem on *The Life and Death of Mary Magdalene* by an unknown Thomas Robinson. If my conclusions are correct, it was written between 1636 and 1639. Dr. Sommer, who has twice edited the work, assigned it to a much earlier date, and to a Dr. Thomas Robinson who was at one time Dean of Durham. It was, however, a product of the reign of Charles I. It is dedicated, in one of the two existing manuscripts, "To the right honourable and truly Noble gentleman, Lord Hen: Clifford, Lord Lieutenant Of the midle shires Of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Northumberland." Now Henry Clifford, 5th Earl of Cumberland, held the somewhat unusual position of joint lord-lieutenant of those counties between March 14, 1636 and August 31, 1639. He was, moreover, the author of certain *Poetical Translations of some Psalms*

and the Song of Solomon, which would have warranted Robinson in giving him the title of poet, as he did in the dedication. There is also a reference in the poem itself, unnoticed by Dr. Sommer, that makes its ascription to the reign of Elizabeth impossible.

> There stood ye Monarche of this tripple Isle:
> The Destinies for euer on him smile.

This pious wish was sadly frustrated, for Charles I was the monarch.

The Life and Death of Mary Magdalene belongs with the poetry that owed its formal inspiration and something of its inner spirit to Spenser. The metre is the eight-line stanza used by Giles Fletcher in *Christ's Victorie and Triumph* and by Phineas Fletcher in *The Purple Island*. Indeed, it is to the brothers Fletcher that our poet is most closely comparable. Like them he lacked Spenser's breadth of invention and his sustained poetical power; like them he had learned from Spenser not only mannerisms but a technique of extraordinary excellence in its kind. There are passages of marvellous beauty in *The Purple Island*, and most of them owe their loveliness to Phineas Fletcher's acquirement of Spenser's eye, his feeling, and his method of expression. In Giles Fletcher somewhat higher qualities of adaptation are discoverable, especially in the final section of his poem; of his strain of ecstatic lyricism Spenser would not have been capable. Robinson must, it is clear, have been strongly influenced by *Christ's Victorie*, even in the management of his theme. The kinship with Giles is more striking than with Phineas,

amounting at times to imitation, though never to imitation that is servile. Robinson's talent, however limited in scope, was genuine: his utterances were his own. From the grosser faults against good taste, which are the great weaknesses of the Fletchers, he was, moreover, comparatively free. The tone of *Mary Magdalene* is thoroughly reverential and harmonious with its subject.

It is not, strictly speaking, a narrative of Mary's life. It is an allegory through which the events of her life are at once revealed and illustrated. The treatment is bold, but it is impressive and memorable. Moreover, there are many stanzas of rich and quiet loveliness among the one hundred and ninety-nine of which the poem is composed. The following will show some of the qualities that make the work remarkable, though quotation cannot represent its larger excellencies.

> The ship, that erst was toss'd with winde and tyde,
> Hath nowe y^{e} port of quietnesse attaind;
> The pilgrime wandringe through y^{e} deserts wide,
> Hath nowe at length a ioyefull harbour gaind;
> And shee, that erst was pitièd and plaind,
> Nowe weepes for ioy, and ioyes in sorrow true;
> And faire Syneide is return'd to viewe
> Her chambers, and to build y^{e} palaces a newe.

More closely connected with the general current of English literature than most saints' lives of the seventeenth century are likewise certain poems by Richard Crashaw. *Sainte Mary Magdalene, or the Weeper* (1646), like the poem by Thomas Robinson, which was written only a few years earlier, does not so much narrate the life of the

Magdalene as use her figure as a theme for allegorical interpretation. Unlike Robinson, however, Crashaw merely descanted upon her tears and did not weave into his stanzas any account of her life. *A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa*, published in the same volume, and *Alexias: The Complaint of the Forsaken Wife of Sainte Alexis*, which Crashaw issued two years later, show that he was never so much interested in the succession of events as in the significance of them. In dealing with saints' lives, as always, he was a lyrical poet. His imagination, delicate and yet bold, found in such themes an inspiration proper to itself. Very subtle and very noble in their way, his tributes to the saints were less a contribution to hagiography than to the literature of religious ecstasy. They are mentioned here because they represent so adequately the reaction from Puritanism to Catholicism that preceded the Puritan triumph. The same tendency, of course, is illustrated in Crashaw's life: ejected from Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1644, he died at Loretto in 1650.

Meanwhile, as the Puritan crisis came nearer, English Catholics became more and more active in publishing lives of saints, even though they had to send them out from the printing-houses of France and the Low Countries. To the Society of Jesus, actively engaged in the English mission, many of these books were due, but by no means all. For example, a *Life and Death of the Glorious Convert s. Marie of Ægypt*, unsigned and undated, without indication of place or printer, represents the obscure way in

which many works were issued. This particular book is supposed to have come from Douay about 1630, though that cannot be proved. It is in verse of no very high accomplishment, not unreadable, but stilted and overwrought with conceits.

Active among the Jesuit hagiographers of the time was Henry Hawkins, whose books were issued from Paris. In 1632 he published *The History of St. Elizabeth, Daughter of the King of Hungary. Collected from various authors*, and a translation from the Italian of Maffæus, entitled *Fruga Sæculi; or, the Holy Hatred of the World. Conteyning the Lives of 17 Holy Confessours*. In the same year, the first volume of a work on the *Lives of English Saints* by a Benedictine, Jerome Porter, and prepared for the press by Francis Hull, appeared at Douay. The second volume was never published, however, and the book is said to be lost. In 1635 appeared two different translations of the Latin *Life of St. Wenefred* by Robert of Shrewsbury, the one by Michael Griffith, *alias* F. Alford, and the other by John Falkner, both of them Jesuits. *The Life and Miracles of St. Benedict*, by John Cuthbert Fursden, 1638, is a work of popularization of the same general character.

The Puritan ascendancy seems to have checked the making of saints' lives; nor, moreover, do they appear to have been cultivated to any extent under the laxer sway of the restored Stuarts. The repressive measures against Catholics that followed the Revolution of 1688 are well known. It is not remarkable, therefore, that during the second half of the seventeenth century very few saintly

legends were written in English. The discouragement caused by the fall of James II would, of itself, account for the lack of hagiographical works from the latter part of the period.

Intrinsically worthless, and curious only because it is the solitary experiment of the sort for many decades, as far as I know, is *The Famous History of Saint George, Englands brave Champion*, a versification of the sections of *The Seven Champions of Christendom* devoted to the national saint. Corser's conjecture, in his *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, that it was made about 1660 by Gaudy Brampton, the lord of a Norfolk manor, seems to be sound. It was, that is, merely the pastime of a country gentleman, which has chanced to survive in his autograph manuscript. More in accord with the spirit of the time was another anonymous modification of *The Seven Champions*, which appeared in 1685. This was entitled *The Delightful History of the Life and Death of That Renowned and Famous St. Patrick, Champion of Ireland.* It contained matters, like an account of St. Patrick's Purgatory, not found in Johnson's book, but it was based on that romantic narrative. Of more importance was the three-volume *Life of St. Teresa* by Abraham Woodhead, published in 1669–71. This translation of the saint's autobiography was not soon forgotten, and was revived by Challoner almost a century later. Other legends from this period, like *The Life and Gests of S. Thomas Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford* (1674), by R. S(trange), and a translation of *The Life of St. Ignatius* by Dominick Bouhours, made by a "Person of

Quality" in 1686, serve merely to illustrate the low ebb to which hagiography had fallen.

Of purely antiquarian and scholarly impulse were the researches which led to the publication by William Cave, in 1674, of his *Antiquitates Apostolicæ: or, the History of the Lives, Acts and Martyrdoms of the Holy Apostles;* and, in 1677, of *Apostolici: or, the History of the Lives, Acts, Deaths and Martyrdoms of those who were Contemporary with, or immediately succeeded the Apostles*, to which the former work was appended as a second volume. Cave's labors were respectable rather than brilliant, and they have been forgotten. Not so with the researches of Henry Wharton — once Cave's assistant — who was moved by the same impulse to the publication, in 1691, of his *Anglia Sacra.* Although his two folio volumes had little to do with writings in English, and concerned themselves with saints' lives only when the saints were prelates, we owe to his devotion some texts that would otherwise be still inaccessible. The *Anglia Sacra* is a monument of brilliant talents spent in scholarship before youth was past: Wharton died only four years after the issue of his great work, at the age of thirty-one.

Through the reigns of Anne and George I, much the same conditions prevailed among English Catholics as during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Indeed, to the previous difficulties of their existence seems to have been added a feeling of hopelessness that kept them inactive. A genius like Pope, though a Catholic, could flourish in those times, but only by adding to his genius extraor-

dinary pertinacity, and only by keeping his religion and his literary career quite separate. Of Catholicism during the entire period the records are singularly incomplete. Dr. Edwin H. Burton says in his admirable study, *The Life and Times of Bishop Challoner:* "There has been no epoch in the history of the Church in this land about which so little has yet been written as the half-century which followed the Revolution. From 1690 to 1740 there is almost a blank in our annals." Thus it is not to be wondered at that hagiological studies did not flourish.

Indeed, I have noted only one work of the sort from Catholic sources between 1700 and 1729. This was a new edition, in 1712, by F. Metcalf, a Jesuit, of Falkner's translation of Robert of Shrewsbury's *vita* of St. Wenefred. Metcalf made some alterations in Falkner's text and added an account of certain late miracles. It was not a remarkable performance, but it became the subject of virulent Anglican attack. In the following year William Fleetwood, Bishop of Ely, reprinted the little book as *The Life and Miracles of St. Wenefrede, together with her Litanies; with some Historical Observations made thereon.* The "observations" were characterized by prejudice rather than great learning; and the obscure little controversy deserves record only as showing how generally neglected and how violently hated were the lives of saints. Although Thomas Dawson, an Anglican antiquary, published in 1714 a book entitled *Memories of St. George the English Patron; and of the most noble order of the Garter,* he used St. George merely as a stalking-horse to introduce

the antiquities of Windsor. Moreover, his pedantic display of learning with regard to the legend of the saint was borrowed from Peter Heylyn, and was far from representing a serious study of the materials.

With 1729, however, began a better era for hagiography. In that year Dr. Charles Umfreville, usually known as Charles Fell, published anonymously in London *The Lives of Saints: collected from Authentick Records of Church History. With a full Account of the other Festivals throughout the year. To which is prefixed a Treatise on the Moveable Feasts and Fasts of the Church.* This work in four quarto volumes was a scholarly attempt to give English readers the lives of the most important saints of the Church, arranging them according to the calendar and citing authorities. In arrangement and method it thus foreshadowed Alban Butler's wonderful collection. Indeed, in my judgment, the work has never been recognized at its true worth. One gathers that Fell must have been difficult as a priest and that he may have been disagreeable as a man. He seems to have involved himself, perhaps discreditably, by the publication of his four volumes; and in 1731 he was declared a bankrupt. In 1732 his irregular election to the London "chapter" occasioned an acrimonious ecclesiastical quarrel. Everything points to some kind of personal animus in the reception given *The Lives of Saints.* Witham, the President of Douay, where Fell had studied for two years, was instrumental in getting the book condemned at Rome, complaining that it was largely translated and that it recorded few miracles. Altogether, the

collection met with no favor, even among Catholics, though Fell managed to get a second edition of it issued in 1750.

Nevertheless, as I have intimated, *The Lives of Saints* has real value, both as a work of scholarship and as an example of sound eighteenth century prose. When one considers that it was compiled while Fell was working amid the hazards and difficulties of the English mission, one cannot fail to be astonished by the steady judgment and the patient investigation that it displays. The style has the serene dignity and the solid exactness of phrasing that the best writers of the time knew how to achieve; and in all details the collection is workmanlike. It was worthy of the best traditions of the Bollandists; and of itself it has by no means deserved the condemnation and neglect it has suffered. Witham's charges rest no more heavily upon it than similar charges might upon any work of reverent and clear-sighted Catholic scholarship. However unfortunate his career may have been, Fell's book should be honored by everyone interested in saints' lives.

In marked contrast is a new translation of Ribadeneira by W. Petre, of which I know only the second edition, published in 1730: *The Lives of Saints with Feasts of the Year, according to the Roman Calendar.* This was an exceedingly careless performance, valueless from any point of view, particularly as there were earlier translations of the work. Another translator of the time was William Crathorne, who assumed the name of Yaxley and later of Augustin Shepherd. He published a *Life of St. Francis of*

Sales in 1737 and a *Life of our Lord Jesus Christ* two years later. Both were from the French, and were the work of his old age. His adequacy for the task of translation is attested by the fact that he was prefect of studies at Douay before he went on the English mission.

The greatest name, save Alban Butler's, in English hagiography of the eighteenth century, as incomparably it is the greatest name in English Catholicism during that period, is that of Bishop Richard Challoner, Vicar Apostolic of the London District, whose long life (1691–1781) spanned decades of intermittent persecution and extended into times of comparative religious freedom. His great work as a prelate was in holding the Catholic Church of his district steady through many difficult years, and in promoting the educational efforts that were essential to its continued welfare. Though he had not unusual learning or extraordinary talent as a writer, his revision of the Rheims and Douay Bible has been altered only in details; and his other publications of various sorts have given him a place as eminent in Catholic literature as the position he won in Catholic history by the wisdom and devotion of his leadership. Obscurely though he lived in the London of his day, his work has been of lasting significance.

The first of his books that dealt with ecclesiastical biography was the *Memoirs of Missionary Priests, as well secular as regular, and of other Catholics of both sexes that have suffered death in England, on religious accounts, from the year of our Lord 1577 to 1684.* The scope of the work is per-

fectly indicated by the long title. It showed the patriotic trend of Challoner's mind, which was to find expression in later writings and in his efforts to restore English saints to the calendar. The *Memoirs*, published in 1741–42, went through many editions and was reprinted as lately as 1878. More ambitious was his *Britannia Sancta: or the Lives of the Most Celebrated British, English, Scottish and Irish Saints*, which he issued in 1745, a work of solid and painstaking scholarship that is still valuable for its well-documented sketches of the heroes of the British Church. Challoner was indefatigable in research, and his historical judgment was amazingly sound. His statement concerning St. Neot, for example, that we have no account which can be relied on, shows how far he excelled in acuteness most scholars of his day. A quotation from the preface will at once illustrate his style and the temper of his personality. "As to the motives that induce us to publish these Lives, we hope they are no other than the glory of God, the honour of his Saints, the information of our Countrymen (who for the generality are but little acquainted with this part of British history), and their edification. We are not insensible of the prejudices under which many of them labour with regard to the Saints and their miracles; which leave us but little hope of this work being of any service to them: but we flatter ourselves that others may, with the divine Blessing, be benefited by the perusal of these sheets."

The *Britannia Sancta* never reached a large audience. Challoner's remaining hagiographical works, however,

were popular in aim. *The Wonders of God in the Wilderness; or the Lives of the most celebrated Saints of the Oriental Deserts* (1755) was a summary account of twenty-eight of the hermit-saints, which was frequently re-published down to the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1757 he issued an abridged and modernized version of Woodhead's *Life of St. Teresa*, and in 1761 *A Memorial of Ancient British Piety*, which covered in brief space the ground of the *Britannia Sancta*. Taken all in all, Challoner's lives of saints, though they were not brilliant, formed a body of writings of exceptional value. Like Ælfric in the tenth century, he wrote with pure devotion to truth and to the widest possible diffusion of truth. Somewhat more than his present meed of fame should properly be his.

The work of Alban Butler, with which eighteenth century hagiography reached its climax, was recognized at once as of outstanding value, and it has never lost the admiration which it excited from the first. Like Challoner, Butler was educated at Douay, and there he laid the foundations of an erudition as extensive as it was exact. His studies were furthered during his tenure of a professorship at the English College, but he did not publish his *magnum opus* until he had travelled extensively and had served as a missioner in England. Later, as president of the English College at St. Omer, he became involved in executive business which prevented him from any further biographical publication, save *The Life of Mary of the Cross;* but he continued his studies devotedly till his death in 1773, at the age of sixty-three.

The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints. Compiled from Original Monuments and Authentic Records, on which he had been at work for many years, was published in four volumes between 1756 and 1759. It is difficult to speak of this magnificent work in tones of measured praise. Most of the author's learning, which seems to have been extraordinary along many lines, was not perpetuated in print; but a rich harvest of it went to the making of *The Lives of the Saints*. The book is the great classic of modern English Catholicism, and it is time-defying in the same way as is the history of Butler's great contemporary, Gibbon. Indeed, even Gibbon had a good word to say of "the sense and learning" that it displays. It contains more than fifteen hundred biographies and monographs, each of which, there is no exaggeration in declaring, was the product of careful study. That Butler made mistakes cannot, of course, be denied. His command of documents was far less complete than ours; and his judgment was not infallible. Nevertheless, the accuracy of his work is as astonishing as its range of information. Two statements from his "introductory discourse" well illustrate his attitude of mind, which was at once devout and critical. "The compiler's first care in this work hath been a most scrupulous attachment to truth, the foundation or rather the soul of all history, especially of that which tends to the advancement of piety and religion." "The original authors are chiefly our guides. The stream runs clear and pure from the source, which in a long course often contracts a foreign mixture; but the

lucubrations of many judicious modern critics have cast a great light upon ancient historians: these, therefore, have been also consulted and compared, and their labours fully made use of."

Had *The Lives of the Saints* been merely a great monument of scholarship, it would have held its place by its sterling qualities, but it would have failed to become the classic that it actually is. "For," as Butler himself wrote, "unless a narration be supported with some degree of dignity and spirit, and diversified by the intermixture of various events, it deserves not the name of history; no more than a plot of ground can be called a garden, which is neither variegated with parterres of flowers, nor checkered with walks and beds of useful herbs or shrubs." Alban Butler's practice in writing, like his theory, was of the mid-eighteenth century. It can be accounted none the worse for that. To a remarkable degree, his style is "supported" with "dignity and spirit." It is never monotonous, and it has the easy, solid dignity of the best prose of his time. What his nephew wrote of him has never been put more justly: "Few authors, on holy subjects, have possessed, in a higher degree, that indescribable charm of style which rivets the reader's attention to the book, which never places the writer between the book and the reader, but insensibly leads him to the conclusion, sometimes delighted, but always attentive and pleased." Whether *The Lives of the Saints* be read as a book of devotion or of history, whether by the man of doubting or of believing mind, it cannot well fail to attract and give

profit. To any person of discretion and taste the clear dry light of the author's personality has an abiding charm. Butler's great work is the masterpiece of modern English hagiography: an almost inexhaustible treasury of learning, the wealth of which is arranged with consummate skill.

Since Butler's day, several tendencies or movements have been responsible for an increase of general interest in the lives of saints, with a corresponding increase in the writing of them. These may well be separately examined, though a detailed description of the works in which they have resulted is scarcely necessary.

First of all, the emancipation of English Catholics from civil and legal disabilities by the successive acts of 1778, 1791, and 1829 helped greatly in promoting the vigorous growth of the Church, which was a notable phenomenon of nineteenth century England. With the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, the Catholic Church took its place once more as a powerful influence in the religious life of the nation. It emerged from the shadowed existence that it had been compelled to endure for a very long period. After 1791, indeed, when it became permissible for Catholics to celebrate their rites openly, the new era began. From that time books of devotion multiplied, and among such books saints' lives. It cannot justly be maintained, I think, that the literature thus developed has been intrinsically remarkable. It has been largely devoted to religious instruction, without much regard to form; and it has, on the other hand, been too often heedless of the standards of historical study that modern hagiology must

observe. No great Catholic poet has risen to envelop the lives of saints with new glory; no master of prose — to Newman's work I shall refer in another connection — has compelled the attention of men to the significance of saintly biography; and English Catholic scholars have contributed surprisingly little to sound hagiography in the recent past, though they are now doing their part with the same spirit as the devoted Bollandists. It is a hopeful sign that latterly the level of Catholic books of instruction and popularization has been raised, until they have become quite generally worthy of praise. This is as true in America as in England.

There can be no doubt that the so-called Oxford Movement, in the second place, did much to relieve saints' lives of the stigma with which they had been marked by Protestant disapproval. The Tractarians and their followers, whether they embraced Catholicism or remained faithful to the Anglican communion, were ardent in their devotion to the saints, and gradually modified the attitude of a very considerable section of the public towards saintly biography. As a document of the movement, *The Lives of the English Saints*, a series projected by Cardinal Newman before he left the Church of England, and never completed, has greater importance than it has in and of itself. Newman conceived the idea of getting some of his companions and disciples to write biographies of the English saints, partly, it appears, that they might find an outlet, other than theological, for their religious energy. Yet he had in mind also, as is clear from his prospectus issued in

1843, to emphasize the national character of the ancient Church in England, and to stir Anglicans to pride in its achievements. He drew up a tentative list of about three hundred names, proposing that more or less than this number of lives should be published, as circumstances permitted. In point of fact, Newman withdrew from the editorship of the series after two parts had been issued; and only thirty-three lives ever appeared.

Although Newman accepted responsibility for nothing save the impulse to the project, and himself contributed two brief legends only, the work very properly bears his name. He selected the authors of the various biographies and, what is even more important, so impressed his point of view upon them that they wrote with extraordinary unity of purpose and similarity of style. Very seldom has a group of men, even when trained in the same university and subjected to the same influences, been able to produce a composite of such an even texture. The reason for this, of course, was that Newman's personality dominated his twelve associates and, to a remarkable degree, formed their manner. Yet they were men of very different natures, as is shown by their subsequent careers. To have driven J. A. Froude and Dalgairns, F. W. Faber and Mark Pattison, Bishop Coffin and Dean Church in equal harness is an astounding feat. Most of the group were young, to be sure, and all of them were caught for the time in the same religious current; but they could not have worked with such unanimity of purpose except under a great leader, which Newman undoubtedly was.

Intrinsically, *The Lives of the English Saints* have no great merit as examples of hagiography. The writers were hampered by a somewhat amusing consciousness of their Catholicism; they felt it necessary to explain at every turn either that they believed in the historical truth of their narratives, or that they considered them "symbols of the invisible" and therefore very truth. There is thus evident in most of the lives something that seems not quite genuine. It is not flippant, I think, to say that the Tractarians were heirs of the Romanticists in respect to certain of the less noble qualities found in each group: the attitudinizing, the exaltation of the past for its own sake, and the subordination of fact to feeling. Certainly men trained at Oxford should not have been guilty of the gross errors that disfigure some of the critical discussions in the *Lives*. Yet it must be remembered that they were, explicitly, retelling old legends, not writing historical essays. Perhaps the one really vicious characteristic of most of the lives in the series is the false air of learning that they parade. Without being in any way scholarly, they seem to be. On the other hand, as narratives they are nearly all well managed; and their luminous if somewhat artificial style gives them a certain literary significance. I do not wish to minimize their value or to deny the reverence with which they were composed; but it would be unjust not to point out their inferiority to Challoner's work in the same field.

Though nine of the thirteen contributors to Newman's *Lives* left the Church of England, the beginning they

made within that Church was of lasting importance. Hagiography regained something of the dignity that it had lost at the Reformation. Henceforward it was permitted to devout members of the communion to cherish the memory of the saints; and it became possible for them to read and to write saintly biography with intentions other than antiquarian. There has grown up an Anglican devotional literature, parallel to the Roman Catholic, in which the lives of saints have a not unimportant place. These books have not been, for the most part, distinguished by unusual learning or by exceptional literary power; but they have served their purpose admirably. They have scarcely revived the moribund *genre*, yet they have gradually educated Anglicans and the Episcopalians of America in the legends of the Church.

Such a comprehensive work, for example, as S. Baring-Gould's *Lives of the Saints*, the first edition of which was published in 1872–77, could not have been made by an English clergyman except for the impulse of which I have been speaking. The industrious compiler's aim, as stated in his preface, was partly devotional, partly scholarly, and partly æsthetic: a compound characteristic of many other less ambitious works of popularization. Some three thousand six hundred memoirs are included in the collection. The legends are fluently and pleasantly narrated, without evident bias and with excellent taste. Exact and critical scholarship is not to be found in them; they were written with less care than Butler's *Lives*, and by a less accomplished scholar. Nevertheless, they serve their turn for

reading and for reference by those not too exigent in their demands.

One phrase in Baring-Gould's preface leads me to speak of a curious modern development in connection with legends. He says that he has chosen to narrate certain miracles for various reasons, among the reasons being "because they are often represented in art." As a matter of fact, to a very considerable section of the Protestant public in England and America the saints are chiefly known "because they are often represented in art." As knowledge of the older painters has been diffused, a considerable literature has been formed to give instruction about the legendary scenes they portray. I am not speaking, of course, of systematic studies in iconography, a field which Protestant and Catholic scholars have latterly cultivated in sufficient harmony, but of works more vaguely defined in purpose and less searching in method. Mrs. Anna M. Jameson, whose *Sacred and Legendary Art* and its companion volumes are widely known, was at once a pioneer and an able compiler of books designed to render the service I have mentioned.

Another impulse towards the study of hagiology in England and America has come about through historical scholarship. The modern historian, with at least the desire to include impartially within his field of investigation all phases of life in the past, has turned his attention to the lives of the great saints. Whatever his religious creed, he has learned in the spirit of the Bollandists themselves to search patiently for the truth. His efforts have been ably

seconded by scholars whose chief interest has been in the successive stages of the English language or in the history of literature. Such monuments of scholarship as the Rolls Series and the publications of the Early English Text Society, among many others, have done much to further our knowledge of documents and to foster an intelligent attitude towards saints' lives. Out of these efforts to bring to light all the facts in the history of the British Isles have come at least a few notable examples of modern hagiography at its best. Such works as the *Memorials of St. Dunstan* by the late Bishop Stubbs and Professor Bury's *St. Patrick* leave little to be desired for carefulness of investigation and sympathy of treatment. Monographs like these cannot be regarded as pure literature, it is true, but they conform to the most ancient purposes for which the lives of saints were written. Better than such romantically tinged legends as the Tractarians wrote, they represent the true spirit of hagiography, to which letters have always been a servant and not a master. In spite of aberrations, the main reason for the existence of saints' lives throughout their long history has been the perpetuation of the truth. In our day, certainly, the only hope of restoring saintly biography to universal repute lies in submitting it to all the tests that scholarship has devised. Once it has been placed in the clearest light, the nobility of the record will compel men to listen attentively.

Finally, a word must be said concerning the share that the English Romanticists of the early nineteenth century had in moderating, at least, the prejudices of Protestant

readers against legends of the saints. Some of the Romanticists, to be sure, included Christianity among the institutions that had to be destroyed in the name of liberty; Byron and Shelley, for example, cannot precisely be accounted defenders of the faith. Yet the prevailing temper of Romanticism in literature favored a return upon ancient traditions, and to the degree that it did so found the lives of saints sympathetic material. Allusions to the saints by English poets grew common as soon as Romanticism became the sovereign literary mood, though neither by the Romanticists nor by their successors have saints' lives been narrated with commanding success. Sympathy, one must suppose, has outrun real knowledge. Lyrical reference, indeed, has been more frequent than the attempt to write legends in verse. John Keble, whose *Christian Year* was published in 1827, had the temper for the task, but he wrote hymns instead. It is to be doubted, moreover, whether his sense of form would have been adequate to rehabilitate the type. Certainly the poems of Aubrey Thomas De Vere, though sufficiently conscientious, did not accomplish this. Saints' lives have not regained in pure literature, whether verse or prose, the place they lost when the schism of the sixteenth century rent the western world apart.

Whether a literary type that has for so long been moribund among the English-speaking races will ever again become a powerful factor in letters we have no means of knowing. It is permitted the lover of saintly lore, however, to trust that this may sometime come to pass.

The modern world has much to learn from the veritable lives of the saints, as they are revealed through critical scholarship; and it could find things of profit to civilization even in the legends that have grown up about their lives.

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CHAPTER I

DEFINITION AND USE

No better discussion of definitions could be wished than that found in *Les Légendes hagiographiques* by H. Delehaye, 1905, of which a second edition appeared in 1906. Translated by Mrs. N. M. Crawford as *The Legends of the Saints*, 1907. Of value in forming opinions on the same subject are H. Achelis, *Die Martyrologien, ihre Geschichte und ihr Wert*, 1900, in *Abhandl. d. k. Gesells. d. Wissens. zu Göttingen*, N.F. III; E. Lucius, ed. G. Anrich, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults in der christlichen Kirche*, 1904; H. Günter, *Legenden-Studien*, 1906, and *Die christliche Legende des Abendlandes*, 1910; the article *Legende* by E. von Dobschütz in the *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie;* and the article *Legends of the Saints* by H. Günter in *The Catholic Encyclopedia.*

CHAPTER II

ORIGINS AND PROPAGATION

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xvii, 110–22 (1895). Of the *Passion of St Margaret* the three versions were: (1) MS. Cott. Tib. A. 3, ed. O. Cockayne, *Narratiunculae*, 1861, pp. 39–49; (2) MS. Cott. Otho B. 10 (burnt); and (3) MS. Corp. Chr. Coll. Camb. 303, ed. B. Assmann, *Bibl. d. ags. Prosa*, iii, 170–80. *St. Giles* and *St. Nicholas* are to be found in MS. Corp. Chr. Coll. Camb. 303. For the *Vision of Leofric*, see A. S. Napier, *Transactions Philological Soc.*, 1908, pp. 180–88.

Page 126. *Life of St. Neot* ed. by O. Cockayne, *The Shrine*, 1864, pp. 12–17, and by R. Wülker, *Anglia*, iii, 102–114 (1880). Consult W. H. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, 1904, pp. 256–61.

CHAPTER V

NEW INFLUENCES: FRANCE AND THE CULT OF THE VIRGIN

Page 133. See P. Meyer, *Légendes hagiographiques en Français* in *Histoire litt. de la France*, xxxiii, 328–458 (1906).

Page 134. As to *St. Eustace*, see Gerould, *Publ. Mod. Lang. Ass.* xix, 335–448 (1905); as to the *Gregory* legend, J. D. Bruce, *Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii*, 1913, pp. xli–lv.

Pages 135–37. The versions of *St. Margaret*, as far as published, are found in A. Scheler, *Deux rédactions diverses de la légende de ste. Marguerite*, 1877; A. Joly, *La vie de ste. Marguerite*, 1879 (by Wace); and F. Spencer, *La vie de ste. Marguerite*, 1887. For the *St. Alban*, see R. Atkinson, *Vie de seint Auban*, 1876. The later life of *St. Edmund* by Denis Piramus, ed. T. Arnold, *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey*, 1890–96 (Rolls Ser. 96). One version of *St. Edward the Confessor*, ed. H. R. Luard, *Lives of Edward the Confessor*, 1858 (Rolls Ser. 3). *Modwenna*, ed. in part by H. Suchier, *Vie de seint Auban*, 1876, pp. 54–58. For *St. Brendan*, see F. Michel, *Les Voyages merveilleux de s. Brandan*, 1888, and H. Suchier, *Roman. Stud.* i, 567. For the *Purgatory of St. Patrick* by Marie de France, see T. A. Jenkins, *L'Espurgatoire saint Patriz*, 2d ed. 1903, and L.

Foulet, *Roman. Forschungen*, XXII, 599–627. The lives of *St. Thomas of Canterbury* may be found in Hippeau, *La Vie de s. Thomas le martyr*, 1859, and F. Michel, *Chroniques des ducs de Normandie*, 1844, III, 461. For the legends by Wace, aside from the *Ste. Marguerite* already cited, see N. Delius, *Maistre Wace's St. Nicholas*, 1850, and V. Luzarche, *La Vie de la Vierge Marie de maître Wace*, 1859. As to Adgar, see C. Neuhaus, *Marienlegenden*, 1886 (*Altfran. Bibl.* 9), W. Rolfs, *Roman. Forsch.* I, 179–236, and J. A. Herbert, *Romania*, XXXII, 394–421. For Nicole de Bozon, see L. T. Smith and P. Meyer, *Les Contes moralisés*, 1889. For the *Cathérine d'Alexandrie*, see M. U. Jarnik in *Memoirs of Acad. of Sciences*, Prague, 1894. For the verse translation of *Vitae Patrum* by Henri d'Arci, see P. Meyer, *Notices et extraits*, XXXV, 1re partie, 137 *ff.*

Pages 138–39. As to Robert de Gretham, see H. Varnhagen, *Zts. f. r. Phil.* I, 541–45; P. Meyer, *Romania*, VII, 345, XV, 296–305, XXXII, 28–37, XXXV, 63–67.

Page 140. For Goscelin, see *Hist. litt. de la France*, VIII, 660–77, and Migne, *Patr. Curs. Comp. Lat.* CLV, 9–120.

Pages 141–42. For Eadmer, see Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, 1691, M. Rule, *Historia Novorum*, 1884 (Rolls Ser. 81), and F. Liebermann, *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquelle*, 1879, pp. 282–317. For Ailred, see Migne, *Patr. Curs. Comp. Lat.* CXCV, 195–796. For John of Salisbury, see J. C. Robertson, *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 1875–85, II, 299–322 (Rolls Ser. 67).

Pages 143–44. For Giraldus, see J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock, and G. F. Warner, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, 1861–91 (Rolls Ser. 21). For Adam, see J. F. Dimock, *Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, 1864 (Rolls Ser. 37). As to the matters under discussion, the reader may profitably consult E. A. Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury: His Death and Miracles*, 1898, and H. Thurston, *The Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln*, 1898. For the lives of *St. Edmund*, see W. Wallace, *Life of St. Edmund of Canterbury*, 1893,

1–18. Extracts from the life of St. Gilbert may be found in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, 2d ed.

Page 145. For the *Purgatory of St. Patrick*, see E. Mall, *Zur Geschichte der Legende vom Purgatorium des heil. Patricius* in *Roman. Forsch.* VI, 139–97 (1891). For the *Vision of a Monk of Eynsham*, see H. Thurston, *The Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln*, 1898, pp. 348–56, 617–21.

Pages 146–50. Consult F. A. von Lehner, *Die Marienverehrung in den ersten Jahrhunderten*, 1886, and L. Zoepf, *Das Heiligen-Leben*, 1908. For Mary legends, specifically, see A. Mussafia, *Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Marienlegenden* in *Wiener Sitzungsberichte der k. Akad. der Wissenschaften*, 1887–98, also *Denkschriften*, XLIV, 1896; and J. B. Hauréau, many important studies in *Journal des Savants*, *Mémoirs de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, *Notices et extraits*, and *Hist. litt. de la France*.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONQUEST TO THE REFORMATION. I

A general account of the Middle English legend collections is to be found in the introduction to C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, neue Folge, 1881. Horstmann had printed much of his information concerning the *South-English Legendary* in *Altenglische Legenden*, 1875. In spite of the defects of his work as editor and compiler, students of Middle English legends owe an incalculable debt to Dr. Horstmann.

Page 152. *South-English Legendary*. MSS. containing the whole or a part of the collection, as far as known to me, are the following: — British Museum: Harl. 2277, 2250, 4012, Royal 17, C. XVII, Stowe 669, Egerton 1993, Cott. Jul. D. IX, Cott. Calig. A. 2, Cott. Cleop. D. IX, Addit. 10301, 10626; Bodleian: Ashmole 43, Laud 108, Laud 463 (formerly L. 70), Vernon, Bodl. 779; Tanner 17, Rawl. poet. 225; Trinity, Oxford, 57; Trinity, Camb. R. 3. 25; Corp. Chr. Camb. 145; St. John's,

Camb. B. 6; King's, Camb. 15; Pepysian, Camb. 2344; Lambeth 223; Auchinleck; Bedford; Phillipps 8253.

Only one MS. has been printed in its entirety (Laud 108) by C. Horstmann, *The Early South-English Legendary or Lives of Saints*, 1887 (E. E. T. S. 87). The following legends have elsewhere been edited: — By F. J. Furnivall, *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints*, 1862, from Harl. 2277, *Andrew*, *Catharine*, *Christopher*, *Dunstan*, *Edmund of East Anglia*, *Edmund of Abingdon*, *Kenelm*, *Lucy*, *Pilate*, *Swithin*, *Ursula*, and from Laud 108, *James the Greater* (in part); by T. Wright, *St. Brandan* 1844 (Percy Soc. 14), from Harl. 2277, *Brendan;* by C. Horstmann, *Jahrbuch f. rom. und engl. Spr. und Litt.* N.F. I, 150–180, from Laud 108, *Michael*, N.F. II, 32–41, from Laud 108, *Christopher*, *Dunstan;* by W. H. Black, *The Life and Martyrdom of Thomas Becket*, 1846 (Percy Soc. 19), from Harl. 2277, *Thomas Becket;* by Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LIII, 17–48, from Ashmole 43, *Brendan;* by Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, 1875, pp. 64–109, from Ash. 43 and Egerton 1993, *Birth of Jesus*, pp. 113–48, from Bodl. 779, *Barlaam*, pp. 151–211, from Ash. 43, Egerton 1993, and Laud 108, *Purgatory of St. Patrick;* by O. Cockayne, *Seinte Marherete*, 1866, pp. 24–33, from Harl. 2277, *Margaret;* by J. Earle, *Gloucester Fragments*, 1862, pp. 78–81, from Laud 463 (with var. from Trin. Oxf. 57) *Swithin;* by W. B. D. D. Turnbull, *Legendae Catholicae*, 1840, from Auch., *Birth of Mary;* by Horstmann, *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, 1878, pp. 148–62, from Laud 108, *Mary Magdalene;* by Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXVIII, 52–73, from Trin. Camb. R. 3. 25 and Lamb. 223, *Mary Magdalene*. The thirty-one additional legends of Bodl. 779 were printed by Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXXXII, 307–53, 369–422 (1889). See also M. Bälz, *Die me. Brendan-legende des Gloucesterlegendars kritisch herausgegeben*, 1909, and W. Schmidt, *Ueber den stil der Legenden des MS. Laud 108*, 1893.

Page 159. For Robert of Gloucester, see W. A. Wright, *The*

Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, 1887 (Rolls Ser. 86); W. Ellmer, *Anglia*, x, 1–37, 291–322 (1888); and H. Strohmeyer, *Der Stil der men. Reimchronik Roberts von Gloucester*, 1891.

Page 164. *North-English Homily Collection.* The MSS. containing the collection are the following: — (1) Original form: Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, Ch. 5. 21; Ashmole 42 in the Bodleian; Lambeth 260; Camb. Univ. Libr. Gg V. 31, and Dd I. 1; Harl. 2391 and Addit. 38010 (formerly Phillipps 8254) in the Brit. Mus.; Phillipps 8122 (now sold). (2) Expanded form (a): Vernon in the Bodl., and Brit. Mus. Addit. 22283. (3) Expanded form (b): Harl. 4196 and Cott. Tib. E. VII in the Brit. Mus. (4) Fragments: Eng. poet. C. 4 in the Bodl. and a MS. belonging to Lord Robartes. See Napier, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXXXIV, 324.

A complete edition of the work has not yet been made, though I have the materials at hand for a text of the original collection, to be issued by the E. E. T. S. The Edinburgh MS. was edited by J. Small, *English Metrical Homilies*, 1862 (with lacunae supplied from Camb. Univ. Gg V. 31 and Ash. 42). See Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 77–81, for *Peter and Paul* from Ash. 42 and pp. 174–88, for *Alexis* from Ash. 42 and Camb. Univ. Gg V. 31. The gospel stories from MS. Vernon have been printed by Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LVII, 241–316, and the *Proprium Sanctorum* from the same source and by the same editor in *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXXXI, 83–114, 299–321. The second part of the collection of MS. Harl. 4196 has been printed, with some omissions, by Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 1–173.

See, further, O. Retzlaff, *Untersuchungen über den nordenglischen Legendencyclus*, 1888, O. Weber, *The Language of the English Metrical Homilies*, 1902, and G. H. Gerould, *The North-English Homily Collection*, 1902.

Page 175. The *Passion of Our Lord* has been edited by F. A. Foster, *The Northern Passion*, 1913–15 (E. E. T. S. 145, 147).

Page 176. *Scottish Legend Collection.* Found in MS. Camb. Univ. Libr. Gg II. 6. Edited by C. Horstmann, *Barbour's des schottischen Nationaldichters Legendensammlung*, 1881–82, and W. M. Metcalfe, *Legends of the Saints in the Scottish Dialect*, 1896 (Scottish Text Soc.). See P. Buss, *Anglia*, IX, 493–514, and E. Koeppel, *Engl. Stud.* X, 373.

Page 184. Mirk's *Festial.* The following is at least a partial list of MSS.: Cott. Claud. A. II, Lansdowne 392, Harl. 2403, Harl. 2247, Harl. 2391, Cajus Coll. Camb. 168, Camb. Univ. Libr. Dd X. 50, Ff. II. 38, Ee II. 15, Nn III. 10, St. John's Coll. Camb. 9. 19 (from Rouen ed. of 1499), Bodl. Gough Eccl. Top. 4, Shrewsbury. Edited by T. Erbe, 1905, Pt. I only (E. E. T. S. XCVI). St. Alkmund printed by Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. CXXIV–CXXVI.

Page 188. Osbern Bokenam. *Legends* found in MS. Arundel 347. Edited as *The Lyuys of Seyntys* for Roxburghe Club, 1835, and by C. Horstmann, *Osbern Bokenam's Legenden*, 1883. See G. Willenberg, *Engl. Stud.* XII, 1–37 (1889). *Mappula Angliae*, ed. Horstmann, *Engl. Stud.* X, 1–41 (1887).

Page 194. *Legenda Aurea.* Translation 1, of Vernon MS., ed. C. Horstmann, *Sammlung altengl. Legenden*, 1878, pp. 1–97. Translation 2, MSS. Egerton 876, Harl. 4755, Harl. 630, Douce 372, Bodleian 596, Trin. Coll. Dublin 319. Printed by Caxton as *The Golden Legende*, 1483. For later editions see P. Butler, *Legenda Aurea, Légende dorée, Golden Legend*, 1899.

Page 197. *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horstmann, 1901, with elaborate introduction.

Page 199. *Cursor Mundi*, ed. R. Morris, 1874–93 (E. E. T. S. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101).

Page 200. *Manuel des Pechiez* and *Handlyng Synne*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Roxburghe Club 1862; reissued by E. E. T. S. 119, 123 (1901–03).

Page 201. *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. M. M. Banks, 1904–05 (E. E. T. S. 126, 127).

CHAPTER VII

THE CONQUEST TO THE REFORMATION. II

Page 206. *Vision of St. Paul.* MS. Lambeth 487. See R. Morris, *Old English Homilies*, 1867, I, 41–47 (E. E. T. S. 34).

Pages 208, 209. *Catharine of Alexandria.* MSS. Royal 17. A. XXVII, Bodleian NE. A. 3. 11, Cott. Titus D. XVIII. Ed. J. Morton, *The Legend of St. Katherine*, 1841, and E. Einenkel, *The Life of St. Katherine*, 1884 (E. E. T. S. 80). *Margaret* and *Juliana.* MSS. Royal 17. A. XXVII, Bodleian 34. *Margaret*, ed. O. Cockayne, *Seinte Marherete*, 1866 (E. E. T. S. 13). *Juliana*, ed. O. Cockayne and E. Brock, *The Lifelade of St. Juliana*, 1872 (E. E. T. S. 51). For all three poems, see Einenkel, *Anglia*, v, 110–22, H. Stodte, *Über die Sprache u. Heimat der Katharine-gruppe*, 1896, O. Backhaus, *Über die Quelle der men. Legende von der h. Juliane*, 1899. For Middle English versions of *Margaret*, see E. Krahl, *Untersuchungen über vier Versionen der men. Margareten-legende*, 1889.

Pages 210, 211. *Meiden Margerete.* Aside from the version of MS. Trin. Coll. Camb. B. 14. 39, the poem is found in MS. Auchinleck, ed. W. B. D. D. Turnbull, *Legendae Catholicae*, 1840, and Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 225–35; and in MS. Bodl. 779, ed. Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXXIX, 411–19.

Pages 212, 213. *Eustace.* MSS. Digby 86 and Ashmole 61. Ed. Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 211–19. *Assumption of Our Lady.* A. Original Form. MSS. and editions: (1) Camb. Univ. Libr. Gg IV. 27. 2, ed. J. R. Lumby, *King Horn*, 1866 (E. E. T. S. 14, re-ed. G. H. McKnight), pp. 44–50; (2) Brit. Mus. Addit. 10036, ed. Lumby, pp. 75–100, and R. Morris, *Cursor Mundi*, p. 1638; (3) Harl. 2382, in-edited; (4) Camb. Univ. Libr. Dd I. 1, in-edited; (5) Camb. Univ. Libr. Ff II. 38. 23, in-edited; (6) Chetham Libr. Manchester 8009, in-edited. Revision A. In *South-English Legendary.* Occurs in various

MSS. of the *Legendary*, but is still in-edited. Revision B. In expanded *North-English Homily Collection*. MSS. Harl. 4196 and Cott. Tib. E. VII. Edited Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 112–18. Revision C. In *Cursor Mundi*, vv. 20065 *ff*. See references under Chapter VI. Revision D. MS. Auchinleck. In tail-rhyme stanzas. Ed. M. Schwarz, *Engl. Stud.* VIII, 427–64 (1885). A so-called critical text of the original version is in E. Hackauf, *Assumptio Mariae*, 1902. See also F. Gierth, *Engl. Stud.* VII, 1–33, and P. Leendertz, *Engl. Stud.* XXXV, 350–58.

Page 214. *The Harrowing of Hell.* MSS. Digby 86, Harl. 2253, Auchinleck. It has been many times edited from one or more of the MSS. but not often in trustworthy form. A satisfactory text of the three MSS., with bibliography, is in W. H. Hulme, *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus*, 1908 (E. E. T. S. C).

Page 215. *Childhood of Jesus.* MS. Laud 108. Ed. Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.*, pp. 1–61. See P. Meyer, *Romania* XVIII, 128.

Page 216. *Gregory.* MSS. and editions: Vernon, ed. Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LV, 407–38 (1876); Auchinleck, ed. Turnbull, *Legendae Catholicae*, and F. Schulz, *Die engl. Gregorlegende*, 1876; Cott. Cleop. D. IX, ed. Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LVII, 59–83; Rawl. poet. 225 (?), in-edited (see W. Heuser, *Engl. Stud.* XXXII, 5). "Critical" ed. by C. Keller, *Die mittelenglische Gregoriuslegende*, 1914. See E. Kölbing, *Über die englische Version der Gregorlegende* in *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Geschichte der Poesie u. Prosa*, 1876, O. Neussell, *Über die Bearbeitungen der Sage von Gregorius*, 1886, and C. Keller, *Einleitung zu einer kritischen Ausgabe der men. Gregoriuslegende*, 1909.

Page 217. *St. Patrick's Purgatory.* MS. Auchinleck, ed. E. Kölbing, *Engl. Stud.* I, 57–112 (1877). For the literature connected with the *Tractatus de Purgatorio*, see T. Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, 1844; Kölbing, *as cited;* E. Mall, *Roman.*

Forschungen, VI, 139–97 (1891); S. Eckleben, *Die älteste Schilderung vom Fegefeuer des h. Patricius*, 1885; G. P. Krapp, *The Legend of St. Patrick's Purgatory*, 1900.

Page 218. *Adam and Eve.* MS. Auchinleck, ed. Horstmann, *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, pp. 139–47. See F. Bachmann, *Die beiden metrichen Versionen des me. Canticum de Creatione*, 1891, and W. Meyer, *Vita Adae et Evae* in *Abhandlungen der bay. Akad.* XIV, 185–250 (1879).

Page 219. *Catharine.* MSS. Auchinleck, Cajus Coll. Camb. 175, ed. Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 242–59.

Page 220. *Mary Magdalene.* MS. Auchinleck, ed. Horstmann, *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, pp. 163–70. For *South-English Legendary*, see references under Chapter VI. Version of *North-English Homily Collection* in MS. Harl. 4196, and ed. as indicated under Chapter VI. See O. Knörk, *Untersuchungen über die me. Magdalenenlegende*, 1889.

Page 221. *Marina.* MS. Harl. 2253, ed. K. Böddeker, *Altengl. Dichtungen des MS. Harl. 2253*, 1878, pp. 254–63, and Horstmann, *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, pp. 171–73.

Page 222. *Vision of St. Paul.* Version (1) MSS. Jesus Coll. Oxford 29, ed. R. Morris, *An Old English Miscellany*, 1872 (E. E. T. S. 49), pp. 147–55, and Digby 86, ed. Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXII, 403–06 (1879). Version (2) MS. Laud 108, ed. Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LII, 35–38 (1874). See H. Brandes, *Visio St. Pauli, ein Beitrag zur Visionslitteratur*, 1885, and *Engl. Stud.* VII, 34–65 (1884).

Page 223. *Jacob and Joseph.* MS. Bodleian 652, ed. W. Heuser, *Das frühmittelengl. Josephlied, Bonner Beitr.* XVII, 83–121 (1905).

Page 225. *Gospel of Nicodemus.* MSS. Cott. Galba E. IX, Harl. 4196, Addit. 32578, Sion Coll. arc. L. 40. 2^{a+2}. Ed. W. H. Hulme, *as above*, under p. 214.

Page 226. *Childhood of Jesus.* MSS. and editions: Harl. 2399, Horstmann, *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, pp. 111–23; Harl.

3954, *work cited*, pp. 101–10; Addit. 31042, Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXXIV, 327–39. See H. Landshoff, *Kindheit Jesu*, 1889.

Page 227. *St. Alexis.* MSS. and editions: Vernon, Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LVI, 391–401, and F. J. Furnivall, *Adam Davie's 5 Dreams*, 1878 (E. E. T. S. 69), pp. 17–79; Laud 108, Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LI, 101–10, and Furnivall, *place cited;* Naples XIII. B. 29, in-edited as a whole; Durham Cath. Libr. D. V. II. 14, in-edited as a whole. Critical ed. of the first three by J. Schipper, *Englische Alexiuslegenden*, 1877. See M. Rösler, *Die Fassungen der Alexiuslegende*, 1905 (*Wiener Beitr.* XXI), and Gerould, *Engl. Stud.* XXXVII, 134–41.

Page 228. *Celestin.* MS. Laud 463 (formerly L. 70), ed. Horstmann, *Anglia*, I, 55–85 (1878). *Barlaam.* MS. Vernon, ed. Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.*, pp. 215–25. *Euphrosyne.* MS. Vernon, ed. Horstmann, *Engl. Stud.* I, 300–11 (1877), and *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, pp. 174–82.

Pages 229, 230. *Vision of St. Paul.* MSS. Vernon and Addit. 22283, ed. Morris, *An Old English Miscellany*, pp. 223–32, Horstmann and Furnivall, *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, 1892 (E. E. T. S. 98), pp. 251–260, and Horstmann, *Engl. Stud.* I, 293–99. *The Trental of St. Gregory.* MSS. and editions: Vernon, Horstmann, *Engl. Stud.* VIII, 275–77 (1885), and Horstmann and Furnivall, *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, pp. 260–68; Cott. Calig. A. II, and Lambeth 306, Furnivall, *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, 1866 (E. E. T. S. 15), pp. 83–92, and Horstmann and Furnivall, *Minor Poems*, pp. 260–68, 747–48; Balliol Coll. Oxford 354, in-edited; Garrett, Princeton Univ., R. K. Root, *Engl. Stud.* XLI, 365–71 (1910). "Critical" ed. by A. Kaufmann, *Trentalle Sancti Gregorii*, 1889 (*Erlanger Beitr.* 3). See H. Varnhagen, *Anglia*, XIII, 105–06.

Page 231. *Margaret.* MSS. and editions: Ashmole 61, Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 236–41; Brome Hall, Suffolk,

L. T. Smith, *A Common-place Book of the 15th Century*, 1886. *St. Patrick's Purgatory*. MSS. and editions: Cott. Calig. A. II, Kölbing, *Engl. Stud.* I, 113–21; Brome Hall, Suffolk, L. T. Smith, *Engl. Stud.* IX, 3–12, and *A Common-place Book*.

Page 232. *Catharine*. MSS. Camb. Univ. Libr. Ff II. 38, and Rawl. poet. 34. Former ed. Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 260–64, latter in-edited. *St. Alexis*. A. MSS. Laud 463 (formerly L. 70) and Trin. Coll. Oxford 57. Ed. Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LVI, 401–16, and Furnivall, *Adam Davie's 5 Dreams*, pp. 17–79. Critical edition by J. Schipper, *Die zweite Version der men. Alexiuslegenden*, 1887 (*Wiener Sitzungsberichte*, CXIV). B. MS. Laud 622, ed. Furnivall, *place cited*, and Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LIX, 79–90.

Page 234. *Canticum de Creatione*. MS. Trin. Coll. Oxford 57, ed. Horstmann, *Anglia*, I, 287–331, and *Sammlung altengl. Leg.*, pp. 124–38. See F. Bachmann, *Die beiden metrischen Versionen des me. Canticum de Creatione*, 1891.

Pages 235, 236. *Christopher*. MS. Thornton, ed. Horstmann, *Altengl. Leg.* N.F., pp. 454–66. *John the Evangelist*. MS. Thornton, ed. G. G. Perry, *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, 1867 (re-issued 1914), (E. E. T. S. 26), pp. 97–105, and Horstmann, *work cited*, pp. 467–71.

Page 237. *Erkenwald*. MS. Harl. 2250, ed. Horstmann, *work cited*, pp. 265–74.

Page 238. *Susanna*. MSS. and editions: Vernon, Horstmann, *Anglia*, I, 93–101, and F. J. Amours, *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, 1897, pp. 172–87 (Scot. Text Soc. 27, 38); Cott. Calig. A. II, Horstmann, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXII, 406–11; Phillipps 8252, Horstmann and Kölbing, *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXXIV, 339–44; Addit. 22283, in-edited, variants *Arch. f. d. Stud. d. n. Spr.* LXII, 411–13; Ingleby, in-edited, variants by Amours, *work cited*. Critical ed. H. Köster, *Huchown's Pistel of Swete Susan*, 1895. See O. G. Brade, *Über Huchown's Pistil of Swete Susan*, 1892.

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CHAPTER VIII

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CHAPTER IX

THE REFORMATION AND SINCE

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